

DGuzik 28 Hosea

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(Hos 1:1)

Superscription

1 This is the word of the LORD which was revealed to Hosea² son of Beeri during the time when³ Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah ruled Judah,⁴ and during the time when Jeroboam son of Joash⁵ ruled Israel.⁶

(Guzik)

Hos 1:1-2:1

HOSEA 1 - THE PROPHET AND THE PROSTITUTE

A. The life and times of the Prophet Hosea.

1. (Hos_1:1 a) Hosea the man.

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri,

a. **The word of the LORD:** Plainly said, Hosea was a *prophet*. He spoke forth the **word of the LORD**, and applied that word to his life, and to the people and circumstances around him. Hosea was a man, but he was a man God used to speak through.

b. **Hosea the son of Beeri:** The name **Hosea** means “salvation.” It comes from the same Hebrew root (*hoshea*) as the names *Joshua* and *Jesus*. Throughout the book, Hosea will show us that salvation is found in turning to the LORD and away from our sin.

c. **Son of Beeri:** This tells us the name of Hosea’s father. We also know that he had a wife named *Gomer* (Hos_1:3), and two sons and a daughter (Hos_1:4; Hos_1:6; Hos_1:9). Nowhere else in the Bible is Hosea mentioned.

2. (Hos_1:1 b) The times Hosea lived in.

In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

a. **Kings of Judah . . . king of Israel:** Hosea's ministry spanned the years 760 to 720 B.C. during the days of the *divided monarchy*. This was after days of David and Solomon, when the people of God divided in a civil war, creating two nations: Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. This is some 250 years after the time of King David, and some 650 years after Israel came into the Promised Land.

b. **Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah:** Hosea's ministry was in the *northern* kingdom of Israel.

We know this because in Hos_7:5 he calls the king of Israel *our king*, and because his ministry is focused towards the northern kingdom of Israel and its capital city Samaria. But for the benefit of his readers in the southern kingdom of Judah, Hosea gives them a reference point for the days of his ministry according to the **kings of Judah**.

c. **Jeroboam . . . king of Israel:** Hosea began his ministry in the days of Jeroboam II. From a political and economic standpoint Jeroboam II was a successful and good king (2Ki_14:23-29). Israel prospered politically and materially under

his reign, but it was a time of significant spiritual and moral decay. The terrible result of this decay wouldn't become evident until the days of Jeroboam II were finished.

i. A dramatic example of this is seen in the lives of the six kings that followed Jeroboam II during the time of Hosea's ministry. Of those six kings, four were violently overthrown and one died as a conquered exile in Assyria.

Kings of Israel during the Ministry of Hosea, 760 to 720 B.C.

Dynasty of Jehu

Jeroboam II

793-752 B.C.

Gave throne to his son

Zechariah

753-752 B.C.

Assassinated

Dynasty of Shallum

Shallum

752 B.C. (one month)
Assassinated

Dynasty of Menahem

Menahem

752-742 B.C.

Gave throne to his son

Pekahiah

724-740 B.C.

Overthrown in coup d'état

Dynasty of Pekah

Pekah

752-732 B.C.
Assassinated

Dynasty of Hoshea

Hoshea

732-722 B.C.

Died in exile

ii. Hosea began his ministry at a time when things were so politically successful and economically prosperous that people just didn't look to the Lord the way that they should. The seeds of idolatry, spiritual failure, and moral corruption sown in days of Jeroboam II produced a tragic harvest in the following years.

iii. Significantly, Jeroboam I was the first king of a divided Israel, leading a popular revolt against the high taxation of Rehoboam, son of Solomon (1 Kings 12). Jeroboam II followed in the wicked footsteps of Jeroboam I.

B. Israel's unfaithfulness and a promise of restoration.

1. (Hos_1:2) The command to take a prostitute as a wife.

When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD."

a. **The LORD said to Hosea:** God's first word to Hosea was something for his own life. This is how God almost always works. Hosea probably would have preferred it if God gave him a word for someone else. But before the prophet can speak to the nation, he first has to hear from God for himself.

b. **Go take yourself a wife of harlotry:** The word God had for Hosea wasn't easy. Hosea was told to take a prostitute for a wife. Why? Because **the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD.**

i. Through His command to Hosea, God brings to life a consistent picture used throughout the Old Testament. In this picture, the LORD is the husband of Israel, and their passionate, chronic attraction for idols was like the lust of an adulterer. His people were as unfaithful as a prostitute was.

ii. In this vivid picture, we see how our idolatry and rejection of the LORD feels to God. When we put anything in front of the LORD, it hurts Him like unfaithfulness hurts the victim of an adulterous marriage. By commanding

Hosea to **take . . . a wife of harlotry**, God will put Hosea in the place where he feels what God feels - and it won't feel good.

iii. "We cannot say that God grieves exactly as we grieve, if only because He controls all things and always works them out in accordance with His own good pleasure. Nevertheless, there is a parallel between God's feelings and ours." (Boice)

iv. Many commentators press the idea that Gomer was not a prostitute when Hosea first met and married her, she only *became* that later and Hosea knew from the LORD that she would become that. This may be the case, but we don't know this from the text. It could go either way.

2. (Hos_1:3-5) Hosea's marriage to Gomer and their first son. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Then the LORD said to him: "Call his name Jezreel, for in a little *while* I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. It shall come to pass in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel."

a. **So he went and took Gomer:** We can assume that Hosea would never marry a prostitute except by the commandment of the LORD. It showed a lot of obedience for him to actually carry out this difficult command.

i. As will be made clear, when Hosea married Gomer, she did not give up her career as a prostitute. It wasn't that Hosea

found a fallen woman and through love and kindness restored her to virtue. He married a prostitute - no doubt hoping she would give up her sin and be devoted only to him - and she stayed a prostitute.

ii. No doubt, this happened after the pattern of human nature. When Hosea and Gomer first married, she probably promised eternal love and devotion. She probably showed every sign of being committed to Hosea. But after a while, and in difficult circumstances, she fell back into prostitution. Perhaps it was out of boredom. Perhaps it was out of a feeling of neglect. Perhaps it was out of a sense of need. Sadly, we share the same inexcusable reasons for our idolatry, when we prefer another god to the LORD God.

iii. Some commentators believe this never really happened, and that Hosea is only telling a vivid story. They think it could never have happened because God would never have a prophet marry a prostitute. But Boice rightly observes, "If Hosea's story cannot be real (because 'God could not ask a man to marry an unfaithful woman'), then neither is the story of salvation real, because that is precisely what Christ has done for us."

b. **Call his name Jezreel:** The first son born to Hosea and Gomer was "**Jezreel**" and the name spoke of two things.

First, **Jezreel** means "Scattered," and Israel would soon be scattered in exile by an conquering Assyrian army. Second, **Jezreel** refers to the Valley of Jezreel, where Jehu - the founder of the dynasty that put Jeroboam II on the throne - massacred all the descendants of Ahab, thus establishing his throne (2Ki_10:11). God directed Hosea to name his son **Jezreel** to confirm His promise to **avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel** by judging the **house of Jehu**.

i. Obviously, this was not good news to Jeroboam II. It said that his dynasty, the dynasty of Jehu, was coming to an end. In fact, after the death of Jeroboam II in 752 B.C. his son Zechariah barely reigned only six months before

being assassinated (2Ki_15:8-10), and that was the end of the **house of Jehu**.

c. **And bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel:** Just as the house of Jehu would fall, so would the whole **kingdom** of Israel. Before the prophetic ministry of Hosea was finished, Israel was defeated, destroyed, and taken captive by the mighty Assyrian Empire (2Ki_17:20-23).

d. **Break the bow of Israel:** “The bow was a symbol of power in a day when it was the principle instrument of warfare.

Thus a broken bow symbolized the loss of power.” (Hubbard)

3. (Hos_1:6-7) A daughter born to Hosea and Gomer.

And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then *God* said to him: “Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away. Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah, will save them by the LORD

their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword or battle, by horses or horsemen.”

a. **Call her name Lo-Ruhamah:** The name **Lo-Ruhamah** means “No Mercy.” Every call to this child with the unfortunate name would remind Hosea and everyone else of coming judgment and exile.

b. **Yet I will have mercy on the house of Judah:** The army of Assyria that destroyed Israel also attacked Judah, but they did not conquer them. Instead, God miraculously fought on behalf of Judah against Assyria when the angel of the LORD killed 185,000 soldiers in the camp of Assyria in one night (2Ki_19:35).

i. The fact that God had *no mercy* to Israel and *had mercy* towards Judah shows two things. First, it is true that Judah and her kings were more faithful unto the Lord during these years, as exemplified by King Hezekiah (2Ki_18:1-8). Second, it does not really matter if Judah was more worthy of mercy than Israel was, because by its very nature mercy is

mercy. If one *deserves* leniency, then leniency is a matter of justice, not mercy. Mercy is only shown to the *guilty*. Therefore it is within the wise and loving heart of God to show mercy to whom He will show mercy (Rom_9:15). But no one is ever *unfair* for *not* showing mercy.

4. (Hos_1:8-9) A second son born to Hosea and Gomer.

Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son. Then *God* said: “Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you *are* not My people, And I will not be your *God*.”

a. **Call his name Lo-Ammi:** The name **Lo-Ammi** means “Not My People.” Every call to this unfortunately named child reminded Hosea and everyone else that the people of Israel had pushed away the Lord God, and should no longer be considered His **people**.

i. Since Gomer did not give up her prostitution, there may have been a cruel irony in the name **Lo-Ammi**. Perhaps this son really was not the son of Hosea, but of another man. Perhaps the appearance of the child made this evident. The message God had to deliver to Israel through Hosea was hard enough, but God also made Hosea have to *live* it.

b. **For you are not My people, and I will not be your God:** This is not so much of a *sentence* or a *penalty*, as it is a *simple stating of fact*. It isn’t as if the people really wanted to be the people of God, yet God will not have them. Instead, the people of Israel rejected God, and here the LORD simply recognizes that fact. He won’t play “let’s pretend”: “You pretend to be My people and I will pretend to be your God.” The time for those games is over.

5. (Hos_1:10 to Hos_2:1) A promise of future restoration.

“Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You *are* not My people,’ *there* it shall be said to them, ‘You *are* sons of the living God.’ Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and

appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great *will be* the day of Jezreel! Say to your brethren, 'My people,' and to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.'"

a. **Yet the number of the children of Israel:** Though God has promised judgment, the days of judgment won't last forever. After judgment, there will come a day of prosperity, increase, and blessing.

b. **Not My people . . . You are sons of the living God:** God would fulfill the promise of *Lo-Ammi* (Hos_1:9), but the judgment would not last forever. One day Israel will return to the LORD, and once again be called **sons of the living God**.

c. **Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together:** God promised a restoration so complete that the division caused by the civil war of Rehoboam and Jeroboam I - a division that stood for 170 years - would one day be erased.

i. We can say that one way this promise is fulfilled is in the church, where God brings together Israel, Judah - and even Gentiles - into one body (Eph_2:14-16).

d. **For great will be the day of Jezreel!** The first child of Hosea and Gomer was named *Jezreel* as a sign of judgment. But God promises a restoration so complete that **Jezreel** will once again be a name of greatness, not judgment.

e. **Say to your brethren, "My people," and to your sisters, "Mercy is shown"** : This shows that the redemption is complete. The child named **Jezreel** has his name redeemed, and now the next two children (*Lo-Ruhamah*, "No Mercy"

and *Lo-Ammi*, "Not My People") have their name redeemed as Israel is once again regarded as **"My People"** unto the LORD and **"Mercy is shown"** unto them. What was a sign of judgment is now evidence of redemption.

(Hos 1:2) ***Symbols of Sin and Judgment: The Prostitute and Her Children***

When the LORD first spoke⁷ through⁸ Hosea, he⁹ said to him,¹⁰ "Go marry¹¹ a prostitute¹² who will bear illegitimate children conceived through prostitution,¹³ because the nation¹⁴ continually commits spiritual prostitution¹⁵ by turning away from¹⁶ the LORD."

(Hos 1:3) So Hosea married¹⁷ Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim. Then she conceived and gave birth to a son for him.

(Hos 1:4) Then the LORD said to Hosea,¹⁸ "Name him 'Jezreel,' because in a little while I will punish¹⁹ the dynasty²⁰ of Jehu on account of the bloodshed²¹ in the valley of Jezreel,²² and I will put an end to the kingdom²³ of Israel.²⁴

(Hos 1:5) At that time,²⁵ I will destroy the military power²⁶ of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."

(Hos 1:6) She conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the LORD²⁷ said to him, "Name her 'No Pity' (Lo-Ruhamah) because I will no longer have pity²⁸ on the nation²⁹ of Israel. For³⁰ I will certainly not forgive³¹ their guilt.³²

(Hos 1:7) But I will have pity on the nation³³ of Judah.³⁴ I will deliver them by the LORD their God; I will not deliver them by the warrior's bow, by sword, by military victory,³⁵ by chariot horses, or by chariots."³⁶

(Hos 1:8) When³⁷ she had weaned 'No Pity' (Lo-Ruhamah) she conceived again and gave birth to another son.

(Hos 1:9) Then the LORD³⁸ said: "Name him 'Not My People' (Lo-Ammi), because you³⁹ are not my people and I am not your⁴⁰

God."⁴¹

(Hos 1:10) ***The Restoration of Israel***

(2:1)⁴² However,⁴³ in the future the number of the people⁴⁴ of Israel will be like the sand of the sea which can be neither measured nor numbered. Although⁴⁵ it was said

to them, "You are not my people," it will be said to them,
"You are⁴⁶ children⁴⁷ of the living God!"

(Hos 1:11) Then the people⁴⁸ of Judah and the people of Israel will be gathered together. They will appoint for themselves one leader,⁴⁹

and will flourish in the land.⁵⁰ Certainly,⁵¹ the day of Jezreel will be great!

(Hos 2:1) Then you will call¹ your² brother, "My People" (Ammi)! You will call your sister, "Pity" (Ruhamah)!

(Hos 2:2) ***Idolatrous Israel Will Be Punished Like a Prostitute***

Plead earnestly³ with your⁴ mother

(for⁵ she is not my wife, and I am not her husband),

so that⁶ she might put an end to her adulterous lifestyle,⁷

and turn away from her sexually immoral behavior.⁸
(Guzik)

Hos 2:2-23

HOSEA 2 - SIN, JUDGMENT, AND RESTORATION

A. Israel's sin.

1. (Hos₂:2-3) Charges against Israel.

"Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; for she *is* not My wife, nor *am* I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; lest I strip her naked and expose her, as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst."

a. **For she is not My wife:** God paints Israel as an adulterous wife, who is no longer worthy to be compared to a wife.

This shows that *relationship* is broken.

i. Israel lewdly offered herself to other gods, in the way that a woman lewdly offers herself to lovers. This is

communicated by the phrase **her adulteries from between her breasts**. “The reference to her ‘breasts’ may imply that she had laid bare her bosom to entice her lovers . . . If she did not change, she would be stripped naked.”

(Hubbard)

b. **Lest I strip her naked and expose her . . . and make her like a wilderness**: God warns Israel that if she will not put away her harlot-like ways, she will be judged. Though *relationship* is broken, *blessing* continues - but will be taken away if Israel does not turn.

2. (Hos_2:4-5) Israel tries to justify her harlotry.

“I will not have mercy on her children, for they *are* the children of harlotry. For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has behaved shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.’”

a. **I will not have mercy on her children**: If Israel as a whole is represented as an unfaithful wife, then her children represent the individual people of Israel. If they do not turn back to the LORD, they will personally experience His judgment.

b. **I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen**: Israel justified her harlotry because she received things from her “**lovers**.” She looked at all the good she seemed to get from her sin, and it seemed like a good deal. Israel didn’t understand the *passing pleasures of sin* (Heb_11:25).

B. God’s judgment.

1. (Hos_2:6-8) How God will draw Israel back.

“Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find *them*. Then she will say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for then *it was* better for me than now.’ For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine,

and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold; *which* they prepared for Baal.”

a. **I will hedge up your way with thorns:** To bring Israel to repentance, God promised to set a hedge of thorns on the sides of her path, so that it would hurt whenever Israel went off the correct path, and so the wrong paths would be hard to find.

i. When God hedges our **way with thorns**, we usually don't like it. We sometimes think God is against us when the thorns hurt and we can't find the wrong paths. But it is really one of the sweetest expressions of God's love to **hedge up your way with thorns** and to **wall us in**.

b. **I will go and return to my first husband:** When God allows the passing pleasures of sin to pass, we often then see how good it was to follow the LORD. In a marriage sometimes the grass can seem greener even with the best spouse; in our walk with the LORD our idols seem attractive until God exposes them. Then we are ready to **return to our first husband**, the LORD.

c. **For she did not know that I gave her grain:** Even when Israel went after other gods, the Lord still provided for her.

This showed His great, unselfish love to Israel. Even though Israel took what God provided and **prepared it for Baal**, He still loved them.

i. When Hosea provided for Gomer, she spent it on her adulterous lovers. It's as if Hosea went to the house of Gomer's lover, where she lived apart from her husband and in adultery. He knew that this scoundrel of a man couldn't provide for Gomer, and that she lived in poverty and rags. Hosea knocked at the door. He spoke to the man who answered, "Are you the man living with Gomer?" The man wondered what business it was of Hosea's; then he revealed: "I'm Hosea, her husband. I've brought these groceries and money so she can be provided for."

When Hosea left, Gomer and her lover must have thought he was a fool. What a great dinner they had together with the food Hosea brought! But this is how the Lord loves us, lavishing blessing on us even when we are worshipping idols, providing us with blessings we waste on other gods.

c. **Which they prepared for Baal:** This principle shows how offensive idolatry really is to God. Whatever we give to an idol, we have received from God.

i. God gives to man the trees of the forest and the iron in the ground. He gives man the brains to make an axe and nails from the iron, and the energy to cut down the tree, the skill to fashion the wood into beams. God gives man the cleverness to make a handle from the wood, and head from the iron, and combine it into an effective hammer.

Then man takes the beams, the nails, and the hammer and he nails God to the cross - where God *willingly stretched out His arms*, dying on the cross to take the guilt and penalty man's sin deserved - and to make an new, restored relationship between God and man possible.

2. (Hos_2:9-13) How God will punish Israel.

"Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time and My new wine in its season, and will take back My wool and My linen, *given* to cover her nakedness. Now I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall deliver her from My hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her New Moons, her Sabbaths; all her appointed feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, 'These *are* my wages that my lovers have given me.' So I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. I will punish her for the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry, and went after her lovers; but Me she forgot," says the LORD.

a. **I will return and take away My grain:** God gave grain to Israel, and she gave what He provided in sacrifice to Baal.

So God will take away this provision, and as Israel feels her need and deprivation - perhaps she will turn back to the LORD.

b. **But Me she forgot:** During the time of Jeroboam II, Israel enjoyed great prosperity. But she used her prosperity for idolatry and the pursuit of ungodly pleasures, so God will take away her prosperity.

C. The restoration of Israel.

1. (Hos_2:14-15) Abundance and joy restored.

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”

a. **I will allure her . . . speak comfort to her:** Once Israel has felt the discomfort of her deprivation, then she will listen to the voice of God once again, and He will **allure** her back to Himself.

i. Spurgeon on **I will allure her:** “This is a singular kind of power: ‘I will allure her;’ not, ‘I will drive her’ not even, ‘I will draw her,’ or, ‘I will drag her;’ or, ‘I will force her.’ No, ‘I will allure her.’ It is a very remarkable word, and it teaches us that *the allurement of love surpasses in power all other forces*. That is how the devil ruins us; he tempts us with honeyed words, sweet utterances, with the baits of pleasure and the like; and the Lord in mercy determines that, in all truthfulness, he will outbid the devil, and he will win us to himself by fascinations, enticements, and allurements which shall be stronger than any force of resistance we may offer. This is a wonderfully precious word: ‘I will *allure* her.’”

b. **The Valley of Achor as a door of hope:** **Achor** means “trouble,” so the **Valley of Achor** is the “Valley of Trouble.” It was a place of trouble, where Achan’s sin was discovered and judged (Jos_7:26). God’s restoration is so great that He will transform the “Valley of Trouble” into **a door of hope**.

c. **She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth:** When Israel is restored, she will be restored to joy. The passing pleasures of sin are forgotten and the true pleasures of God are restored.

2. (Hos_2:16-20) Relationship restored.

“And it shall be, in that day,” says the LORD, “*That* you will call Me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer call Me ‘My Master,’ For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, and they shall be remembered by their name no more. In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and *with* the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely. I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD.

a. **You will call Me “My Husband”** : With great anticipation, God looks forward to the day when relationship is genuinely restored with His people. *He wants* an intimate love-relationship with His people, and longs for the day when His people will have a marriage-like love and commitment to their God.

b. **And not longer call Me “My Master”** : God was not satisfied with a fear-based, obedience-focused relationship with His people where they thought of Him primarily as **Master**. He wanted a relationship where they thought of Him primarily as **Husband**.

c. **I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals:** In Hebrew, the name “Baal” comes from the word “**Master**” and the two words sound alike. It was the **Baals**, the idols of the nations, that wanted this “master-slave” relationship with man. But not the LORD God; He wants a love-based, commitment-based relationship with His people.

d. **Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth:** Ultimately, this blessing of restored relationship will result in a transformed earth, changed both ecologically

(**beasts of the field . . . birds of the air**) and politically. This blessing will be fulfilled in the millennial earth, but we can come to know the transforming power of restored relationship right now.

e. **I will betroth you to Me forever:** When relationship with the LORD is ultimately restored, it will never be broken again. Relationship will be restored on a solid foundation (**In righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy**), and will result in deeper and deeper relationship (**you shall know the LORD**).

3. (Hos_2:21-23) Blessing restored.

“It shall come to pass in that day *that* I will answer,” says the LORD; “I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth.

The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on *her who had* not obtained mercy; then I will say to *those who were* not My people, ‘You *are* My people!’ and they shall say, ‘You *are* my God!’”

a. **I will answer:** This is great blessing of real, vibrant relationship with God. Our hearts beat in rhythm to His, and so we want what He wants. So when we ask God to do things, we already ask what He wants to do - so He **will answer**.

i. This is the same principle Jesus taught: *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.* (Joh_15:7)

b. **The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil:** When relationship is where it is supposed to be, God abundantly provides. This is the same principle Jesus taught in Mat_6:33 : *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

c. **They shall answer Jezreel:** The name “**Jezreel**” means “Scattered,” and could be used in a negative sense (as in

Hos_1:4-5). But it was also the word used to describe the good scattering of seed, “Sowing.” Here, the LORD promises glorious redemption of the name **Jezreel**, which was first given as a sober reminder of scattering in judgment. Now it becomes a prophecy of the promise, “**I will sow her for Myself in the earth.**” God will restore His people to abundance and blessing. Scattering will be transformed into sowing.

d. **And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy:** Hosea’s second child, a daughter, was named *Lo-Ruhamah*, meaning “No Mercy” (Hos_1:6). That name, originally given as a marker of judgment is now transformed into a mark of restoration.

e. **Then I will say to those who were not My people, “You are My people!”** Hosea’s third child, a son, was named *Lo-Ammi*, meaning “Not My People” (Hos_1:9). That name, originally given as a marker of judgment, is now transformed into a mark of restoration.

f. **And they shall say, “You are my God!”** With this, the restoration is complete. The LORD relates to His people as their God, and His people relate to Him as His people. This is *relationship*, full of warmth and love, and what God longs for.

i. Think about it: Which one of the pagan gods of the nations ever wanted the *love* of their followers? Which of them ever asked, “Do you love me?” False gods don’t want our *love*, they want our fear, our obedience, our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. But the true God, the living God, isn’t satisfied with just our fear, our obedience, or even with our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. *He wants our love, freely given and enjoyed in relationship with Him.* If we miss this, we miss the heart of God’s work in us and for us.

ii. We see *complete* restoration. All three of Hosea’s children, named as marks of judgment, now have their names restored and made into marks of mercy, grace, and restoration. God is that good!

(Hos 2:3) Otherwise, I will strip her naked,

and expose her like she was when she was born.

I will turn her land into a wilderness

and make her country a parched land,

so that I might kill⁹ her with thirst.

(Hos 2:4) I will have no pity on her children,¹⁰

because they are children conceived in adultery.¹¹

(Hos 2:5) For their mother has committed adultery;

she who conceived them has acted shamefully.

For she said, "I will seek out¹² my lovers;¹³

they are the ones who give me my bread and my water,

my wool, my flax, my olive oil, and my wine.¹⁴

(Hos 2:6) ***The Lord's Discipline Will Bring Israel Back***

Therefore, I will soon¹⁵ fence her in¹⁶ with thorns;

I will wall her in¹⁷ so that¹⁸ she cannot find her way.¹⁹

(Hos 2:7) Then she will pursue her lovers, but she will not catch²⁰ them;

she will seek them, but she will not find them.²¹

Then she will say,

"I will go back²² to my husband,²³

because I was better off then than I am now."²⁴

(Hos 2:8) ***Agricultural Fertility Withdrawn from Israel***

Yet²⁵ until now²⁶ she has refused to acknowledge²⁷ that
I²⁸ was the one

who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil;

and that it was I who²⁹ lavished on her the silver and gold
—

which they³⁰ used in worshiping Baal!³¹

(Hos 2:9) Therefore, I will take back³² my grain during the
harvest time³³

and my new wine when it ripens;³⁴

I will take away my wool and my flax

which I had provided³⁵ in order to clothe her.³⁶

(Hos 2:10) Soon³⁷ I will expose her lewd nakedness³⁸ in
front of her lovers,

and no one will be able to rescue her from me!³⁹

(Hos 2:11) I will put an end to all her celebration:

her annual religious festivals,

monthly new moon celebrations,

and weekly Sabbath festivities —

all her appointed festivals.

(Hos 2:12) I will destroy her vines and fig trees,

about which she said, "These are my wages for prostitution⁴⁰

that my lovers gave to me!"

I will turn her cultivated vines and fig trees⁴¹ into an uncultivated thicket,

so that wild animals⁴² will devour them.

(Hos 2:13) "I will punish her for the festival days

when she burned incense to the Baal idols;⁴³

she adorned herself with earrings and jewelry,

and went after her lovers,

but⁴⁴ she forgot me!"⁴⁵ says the LORD.

(Hos 2:14) ***Future Repentance and Restoration of Israel***

However, in the future I will allure her;⁴⁶

I will lead⁴⁷ her back into the wilderness,

and speak tenderly to her.

(Hos 2:15) From there I will give back her vineyards to her,

and turn the "Valley of Trouble"⁴⁸ into an "Opportunity⁴⁹ for Hope."

There she will sing as she did when she was young,⁵⁰

when⁵¹ she came up from the land of Egypt.

(Hos 2:16) "At that time,"⁵² declares the LORD,

"you will call,⁵³ 'My husband';⁵⁴

you will never again call me,⁵⁵ 'My master.'⁵⁶

(Hos 2:17) For⁵⁷ I will remove the names of the Baal idols⁵⁸ from your lips,⁵⁹

so that you will never again utter their names!"⁶⁰

(Hos 2:18) ***New Covenant Relationship with Repentant Israel***

"At that time⁶¹ I will make a covenant for them with the wild animals,

the birds of the air, and the creatures that crawl on the ground.

I will abolish⁶² the warrior's bow and sword

— that is, every weapon of warfare⁶³ — from the land,

and I will allow them to live securely."⁶⁴

(Hos 2:19) I will commit myself to you⁶⁵ forever;

I will commit myself to you in⁶⁶ righteousness and justice,

in steadfast love and tender compassion.

(Hos 2:20) I will commit myself to you in faithfulness;

then⁶⁷ you will acknowledge⁶⁸ the LORD."⁶⁹

(Hos 2:21) ***Agricultural Fertility Restored to the Repentant Nation***

"At that time,⁷⁰ I will willingly respond,"⁷¹ declares the LORD.

"I will respond to the sky,

and the sky⁷² will respond to the ground;

(Hos 2:22) then the ground will respond to the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil;

and they will respond to 'God Plants' (Jezreel)!⁷³

(Hos 2:23) Then I will plant her as my own⁷⁴ in the land.

I will have pity on 'No Pity' (Lo-Ruhamah).

I will say to 'Not My People' (Lo-Ammi), 'You are my people!'

And he⁷⁵ will say, 'You are⁷⁶ my God!' "

(Hos 3:1) ***An Illustration of God's Love for Idolatrous Israel***

The LORD said to me, "Go, show love to¹ your wife² again, even though she loves³ another man⁴ and continually commits adultery.⁵ Likewise, the LORD loves⁶ the Israelites⁷ although they turn to other gods and love to offer raisin cakes to idols."⁸

(Guzik)

Hos 3:1-5

HOSEA 3 - THE RESTORATION OF AN ADULTEROUS WIFE

A. The restoration of Gomer.

1. (Hos_3:1) God commands Hosea to love Gomer again.

Then the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman *who is* loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love *the* raisin cakes *of the pagans.*"

a. **Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery:** God directs Hosea to go back to his wife, even though she is **committing adultery**. It isn't in the past; it is in the present; yet he is commanded to go back to her and to **love** her.

i. This shows us that though Deu_24:1 and Mat_19:7-8 *permit* divorce when adultery breaks the marriage union, it by no means *commands* divorce. If God *commanded* divorce in the case of adultery, the He would go against His own command here.

ii. This also shows us an important principle about love: Hosea is *directed to love, even when it must have been hard*

to love. We are filled with many romantic illusions about love, and one of these illusions is that love has very little to do with our *will* - we are just “captured” by love and follow whatever course it leads. But in principle, the Scriptures show us another way: That love is largely a matter of the *will*, and when we direct ourselves to love someone God tells us we must love, it can and will happen. This is why “We’re not in love anymore” isn’t valid

grounds for a bad relationship or divorce. It assumes that love is something beyond or outside of our will.

b. Just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel: Why did God command Hosea to go back to his still-unfaithful wife? Not only for the sake of Hosea and his wife Gomer, but also so that they would become a living lesson of the LORD’s relationship with His people. They were still steeped in spiritual adultery, yet the LORD still loved them.

i. When we think of the greatness of God’s love and compassion towards us, it should make us much more loving,

compassionate, and forgiving towards others.

2. (Hos_3:2-3) Hosea demonstrates his love to Gomer and restores her through purchase.

So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. And I said to her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so, too, *will I be toward you.*”

a. So I bought her for myself: Hosea didn’t really need to “buy” His own wife, to hire her as a prostitute. She was his wife! But as a display of love and commitment, he goes the “extra mile,” beyond what is expected or even reasonable.

i. In providing this way for his own wife, Hosea also showed her: “I can give you what the others can. You don’t need them. Let me show you how I can provide for your needs.”

ii. Boice takes **bought her for myself** to mean that Gomer was sold as a slave and Hosea bought her out of her slavery.

This is possible, but not necessary. It seems more natural to regard the payment as “buying her out of prostitution.”

b. **You shall stay with me many days:** The point of paying Gomer wasn't just to get her to give up her trade as a prostitute. It was to bring her into relationship with Hosea, her husband. Relationship and living together was the goal.

B. The restoration of Israel.

1. (Hos_3:4) The fallen state of Israel.

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.

a. **Without king or prince:** In her fallen state, Israel will not have the national or political leadership she needs.

b. **Without sacrifice or sacred pillar:** In her fallen state, Israel will not have the spiritual service she needs.

c. **Without ephod or teraphim:** In her fallen state, Israel will not have the supernatural guidance and direction she needs.

2. (Hos_3:5) The restored state of Israel.

Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

a. **The children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God:** In this time of political and spiritual ruin, Israel will **return and seek the LORD** again. This will mark their restoration - and there will be no restoration until they turn back to the LORD.

b. **And David their king . . . in the latter days:** This shows that this prophecy will be *ultimately* fulfilled in the millennial kingdom, where David will reign over Israel (Isa_55:3-5, Jer_30:9, Eze_34:23-25). But any individual *right now* can enjoy this blessing of restored relationship if they will turn back to the LORD.

(Hos 3:2) So I paid fifteen shekels of silver and about seven bushels of barley⁹ to purchase her.

(Hos 3:3) Then I told her, "You must live with me many days; you must not commit adultery or have sexual intercourse with¹⁰ another man, and I also will wait for you."

(Hos 3:4) For the Israelites¹¹ must live many days without a king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred fertility pillar, without ephod or idols.

(Hos 3:5) Afterward, the Israelites will turn and seek the LORD their God and their Davidic king.¹² Then they will submit to the LORD in fear and receive his blessings¹³ in the future.¹⁴

(Hos 4:1) ***The Lord's Covenant Lawsuit against the Nation Israel***

Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites!¹

For the LORD has a covenant lawsuit² against the people of Israel.³

For there is neither faithfulness nor loyalty in the land,

nor do they acknowledge God.⁴

(Guzik)

Hos 4:1-19

HOSEA 4 - ISRAEL'S SIN AND GOD'S REMEDY

A. The charge against Israel.

1. (Hos_4:1-3) A statement of the charge: Israel's sin and God's remedy.

Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel, for the LORD *brings* a charge against the inhabitants of the land: "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. *By* swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away."

a. Clarke on **brings a charge**: “What we should call a *lawsuit*, in which God is *plaintiff*, and the Israelites *defendants*. It is Jehovah *versus* Israel and Judah.”

b. **There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land**: Each of these three points is connected. When people forsake the **knowledge of God**, soon **truth** and **mercy** are both gone. **Truth** must be rooted in something more than personal opinion, and **mercy** means going beyond self-interest.

i. True wisdom and understanding always begin with the knowledge of God. Pro_9:10 says, *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

ii. Alexander Pope, a famous writer, once wrote: “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; the proper study of mankind is man.” But an even more famous writer, Charles Spurgeon, responded to Pope’s statement: “It has been said by someone that ‘the proper study of mankind is man.’ I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.”

c. **They break all restraint**: It all connects back to leaving **the knowledge of God**. Soon, **truth** and **mercy** are things of the past, and people no longer practice **restraint**. When man will not or can not restrain himself, **bloodshed** and destruction follow.

i. Our modern age is completely set against the idea of **restraint**. You see it in modern advertising slogans: • “To know no boundaries”

- “No rules, just right”
- “Just do it”

- “Break all the rules”
- “Peel off inhibitions. Find your own road”
- “Living without boundaries”

ii. The message is the same: You make your own rules. You answer to no one. You are the one that matters. Your universe revolves around you. You should only restrain yourself if you want to.

iii. The ultimate result is **bloodshed after bloodshed**. In the ancient Hebrew, this is literally “bloody deed touches bloody deed.” “Apparently violent crimes had become so common that one seemed immediately to follow another, as if touching it.” (Wood)

d. **Everyone who dwells there will waste away**: This is the tragic fruit of forsaking the knowledge of God, truth, mercy, and restraint. Satan sings sweetly to us, making us think or hope that casting these things away is a doorway to freedom - but it is only a path to destruction.

i. “Paul probably had Hosea’s chapter in mind as he penned his own indictment of the gentile nations (cf. Hos_4:6 with Rom_1:24; Rom_1:26; Rom_1:28; Hos_4:7 with Rom_1:23; Hos_4:11 with Rom_1:21-22).” (Boice)

2. (Hos_4:4-8) The corrupt and ineffective leadership of the priests.

“Now let no man contend, or rebuke another; for your people *are* like those who contend with the priest. Therefore you shall stumble in the day; the prophet also shall stumble with you in the night; and I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of My people; they set their heart on their iniquity.”

a. **Your people are like those who contend with the priest**: In passages like Deu_17:9-12, God clearly

commanded His people to listen to and submit to the priests, who would lead and help the people with the Word of God. But because the people cast off the knowledge of God, truth, mercy, and restraint, they wouldn't listen to the priests, and contended with them instead.

i. This helps to explain the opening of the verse: **Now let no man contend, or rebuke another.** The idea is "They won't listen to the priest, but they **contend** with him instead. So don't waste your time trying to **contend** or **rebuke** them yourself."

b. **Therefore you shall stumble in the day:** It's bad enough to stumble in the night, but at least we can understand it.

But when God's people cast off the knowledge of God, restraint, and guidance from leaders then they shall **stumble even in the day.**

c. **The prophet also shall stumble with you in the night:** God paints a picture so bleak that even the **prophet** is dragged down to the level of the people and stumbles. Perhaps the prophet thought he was safe or immune because of his spiritual standing or reputation, but he is not. **The prophet also shall stumble with you.**

d. **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:** When God's people are **destroyed** and waste away, it isn't because God has lost either His love or strength. It's because His people **lack . . . knowledge.**

i. It isn't that God says His people are completely ignorant. They have *some knowledge*, but not enough. They may have just enough to make them think they know it all.

ii. What kind of **knowledge** do they **lack**? In the context, the first answer must be they lack *the knowledge of God* (Hos_4:1). They know God some - perhaps a little - but not *enough*. Perhaps they felt they knew God well enough already.

iii. The second kind of **knowledge** they **lack** is the knowledge of God's Word (**you have forgotten the law of**

your God). They know the Word of God some - perhaps a little - but not *enough*. Perhaps they felt they knew God's Word well enough already.

iv. It should not surprise us that there is a connection between knowing God and knowing His Word. Some people think that Bible knowledge is boring and brainy and not necessary for a real walk with God. But God and His Word are vitally connected. Psa_138:2 says, *You have magnified Your word above all Your name*. When God sought for a term to express His nature, He calls Himself "The Word" (Joh_1:1).

v. When we know God for who He really is, it affects our conduct. "Where there is *no knowledge of God*, no conviction of his *omnipresence* and *omniscience*, private offences, such as stealing, adulteries, and so forth, will prevail." (Clarke)

e. **Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me:** Here we see who is responsible for the **lack of knowledge** among the people of God - the priests who **rejected knowledge**, the knowledge of God and His Word.

i. Teaching was an important duty of the priests (Deu_33:10, Eze_44:23, Mal_2:7). Their neglect of this demonstrates what an important place the minister, the pastor, the preacher has in presenting God and His Word to the people. If he neglects his duty to *preach the word* (2Ti_4:2), then he can't lead the people into the true knowledge of God, and will lead them into destruction.

ii. **I will also forget your children:** God will hold the unfaithful minister, pastor, or preacher accountable. They have much to answer for before God.

iii. **Priest for Me** reminds us that the priest didn't only serve on behalf of the people, but also on behalf of the LORD. The priest represented the people to God, but also represented - through the preaching of the word - God to the people.

f. **The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame:** God

blessed the priests with *increase*, but they took God's blessing for granted and only **sinned against** God all the more.

Blessing is a two-edged gift; it is obviously wonderful to be blessed, but it also brings more accountability and more opportunity for sin.

g. **They eat up the sin of My people:** "They did this by enjoying the benefits of the people's sins, such as taking bribes and eating the sin offerings. So the priests actually relished Israel's wickedness." (Wood) 3. (Hos_4:9-10) Judgment is promised.

"And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their deeds. For they shall eat, but not have enough; they shall commit harlotry, but not increase; because they have ceased obeying the LORD."

a. **Like people, like priest:** The priests may have thought they would be immune from the judgment coming upon Israel. After all, they were priests! But God promises that when it comes to judgment, **like people, like priest**.

i. There is no doubt that the priesthood of Israel was corrupt. "Jeroboam I had made priests 'from all sorts of people' (1Ki_12:31; 1Ki_13:33). Therefore, large numbers of true priests - and doubtless true prophets, also - had left the northern kingdom (2Ch_11:13-16)." (Wood)

ii. There is also another way to understand the phrase "**like people, like priest**." It also means that *as the people go*, so go the priests. Sometimes people expect their religious leaders to be holy *for them* or *instead of them*. But since the "priests" come from the people, if the people are backslidden then many backslidden men will seek to be "priests."

b. **They shall eat, but not have enough:** One aspect of the judgment God promises is that Israel will not be blessed with increase. They will have, but it will never seem to be **enough**, and they will never be satisfied.

4. (Hos_4:11-14) The adultery of idolatry.

“Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. My people ask counsel from their wooden *idols*, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused *them* to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God. They offer sacrifices on the mountaintops, and burn incense on the hills, under oaks, poplars, and terebinths, because their shade *is* good. Therefore your daughters commit harlotry, and your brides commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for *the men* themselves go apart with harlots, and offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot.

Therefore people *who* do not understand will be trampled.”

a. **The spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray:** Israel’s idolatry was like adultery against the LORD. Every sacrifice made to a pagan god was like an act of adultery.

i. The picture is striking when we consider *what a faithful and good husband the LORD is to His people*. Adultery is never excusable, but is even more heinous against a good, faithful, loving spouse.

ii. The picture is striking when we consider *how Israel wanted to add pagan gods to their worship of the LORD*. It isn’t as if Israel officially said, “We want to leave the LORD, and now serve only pagan gods.” Instead, Israel wanted to *add* the worship of pagan gods to their worship of the LORD. God received this the same way a husband would if his wife said, “I want you to still be my husband, I just want to take on a few more lovers also.”

b. **For the men themselves go apart with harlots, and offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot:** Describing idolatry as spiritual adultery is especially appropriate when we understand that many pagan gods were “worshipped” by the hiring of a **ritual harlot**. This was far more enticing than just praying to a statue.

i. **I will not punish your daughters:** Because the men of Israel sinned this way, God would not single the women of

Israel out for judgment when it came to this sin. God doesn't have a double standard for sexual conduct between men and women.

c. **Therefore people who do not understand will be trampled:** The idea of Hos_4:6 is repeated (*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*). Without understanding God and His word, God's people are destined for destruction.
B. A warning to Judah.

1. (Hos_4:15) Judah is warned not to follow Israel's sinful ways.

"Though you, Israel, play the harlot, let not Judah offend. Do not come up to Gilgal, nor go up to Beth Aven, nor swear an oath, *saying*, 'As the LORD lives';"

a. **Let not Judah offend:** At this time, God's people were divided into two nations - Israel to the north, and Judah to the south. Israel's apostasy was far more ingrained, so Judah is cautioned that they must not follow her neighbor's sinful ways.

b. **Do not come up to Gilgal:** The cities of **Gilgal** and **Beth Aven** were centers of idolatry in Israel. For a citizen of Judah to travel there meant they shared in Israel's idolatry. When we get too close to sinful practices, they often rub off on us: *Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."* (1Co_15:33) i. At one time, **Gilgal** was a place where prophets were trained under Elijah and Elisha (2Ki_2:1; 2Ki_4:38). But in Hosea's day it had become a center of false worship (Hos_9:15; Hos_12:11; Amo_4:4; Amo_5:5).

ii. There is no city actually named **Beth Aven**. Hosea is twisting the name of the city of *Bethel* - meaning "House of God" - into the more fitting name **Beth Aven**, meaning "House of Deceit." Bethel was the southern center of calf worship established by Jeroboam I (1Ki_12:28-29).

2. (Hos_4:16-19) A summary of the charge: Israel's sin and God's remedy.

“For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf; now the LORD will let them forage like a lamb in open country. Ephraim *is* joined to idols, let him alone. Their drink is rebellion, they commit harlotry continually. Her rulers dearly love dishonor. The wind has wrapped her up in its wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.”

a. **Israel is stubborn like a stubborn calf:** Cattle can safely feed out on the open range, because they are not easy prey for predators. But **a lamb in open country** has strayed from the shepherd and is vulnerable. Hosea’s point is plain: if you act like a stubborn cow, don’t expect to be protected like an obedient sheep.

b. **Ephraim is joined to idols:** “**Ephraim**” was the largest tribe that made up the population of Israel. Therefore, the prophets often refer to Israel as “**Ephraim**.”

c. **Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone:** This is one way to express the judgment that is coming against Israel. God will simply leave Ephraim **alone**. When the mighty Assyrian army comes against them, they may fight for themselves - God will **let him alone**.

i. We don’t want God to leave us **alone** because we need Him to protect us against our spiritual enemies. Satan wanted to sift Peter like wheat, but Jesus did not leave Peter alone to face the attack. Jesus prayed for Peter, and he emerged victorious (Luk_22:31-32).

ii. We don’t want God to leave us **alone** because we need Him to protect us against ourselves. Left to ourselves, with our own sinful hearts, we will surely drift away from the LORD. All God must do to make certain a man goes to hell is simply **let him alone**. Our prayer should always be, “LORD, don’t leave me alone. Keep working on me.”

(Hos 4:2) There is only cursing, lying, murder, stealing, and adultery.

They resort to violence and bloodshed.⁵

(Hos 4:3) Therefore the land will mourn,

and all its inhabitants will perish.⁶

The wild animals,⁷ the birds of the sky,

and even the fish in the sea will perish.

(Hos 4:4) ***The Lord's Dispute against the Sinful Priesthood***

Do not let anyone accuse or contend against anyone else:⁸

for my case is against you priests!⁹

(Hos 4:5) You stumble day and night,

and the false prophets stumble with you;

You have destroyed your own people!¹⁰

(Hos 4:6) You have destroyed¹¹ my people

by failing to acknowledge me!

Because you refuse to acknowledge me,¹²

I will reject you as my priests.

Because you reject¹³ the law of your God,

I will reject¹⁴ your descendants.

(Hos 4:7) The more the priests increased in numbers,

the more they rebelled against me.

They have turned¹⁵ their glorious calling

into a shameful disgrace!

(Hos 4:8) They feed on the sin offerings of my people;

their appetites long for their iniquity!

(Hos 4:9) I will deal with the people and priests together:¹⁶

I will punish them both for their ways,

and I will repay them for their deeds.

(Hos 4:10) They will eat, but not be satisfied;

they will engage in prostitution, but not increase in numbers;

because they have abandoned the LORD

by pursuing other gods.¹⁷

(Hos 4:11) ***Judgment of Pagan Idolatry and Cultic Prostitution***

Old and new wine

take away the understanding of my people.¹⁸

(Hos 4:12) They consult their wooden idols,

and their diviner's staff answers with an oracle.

The wind of prostitution blows them astray;

they commit spiritual adultery¹⁹ against their God.
(Hos 4:13) They sacrifice on the mountaintops,

and burn offerings on the hills;

they sacrifice²⁰ under oak, poplar, and terebinth,

because their shade is so pleasant.

As a result, your daughters have become cult prostitutes,

and your daughters-in-law commit adultery!
(Hos 4:14) I will not punish your daughters when they
commit prostitution,

nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery.

For the men consort with harlots,

they sacrifice with temple prostitutes.

It is true:²¹ "A people that lacks understanding will come to ruin!"

(Hos 4:15) ***Warning to Judah: Do Not Join in Israel's Apostasy!***

Although you, O Israel, commit adultery,

do not let Judah become guilty!

Do not journey to Gilgal!

Do not go up to Beth Aven!²²

Do not swear, "As surely as the LORD lives!"

(Hos 4:16) Israel has rebelled²³ like a stubborn heifer!

Soon²⁴ the LORD will put them out to pasture

like a lamb in a broad field!²⁵

(Hos 4:17) Ephraim has attached himself to idols;

Do not go near him!

(Hos 4:18) ***The Shameful Sinners Will Be Brought to Shame***

They consume their alcohol,

then engage in cult prostitution;

they dearly love their shameful behavior.

(Hos 4:19) A whirlwind has wrapped them in its wings;

they will be brought to shame because of their idolatrous worship.²⁶

(Hos 5:1) ***Announcement of Sin and Judgment***

Hear this, you priests!

Pay attention, you Israelites!¹

Listen closely,² O king!³

For judgment is about to overtake you!⁴

For you were like a trap⁵ to Mizpah,⁶

like a net⁷ spread out to catch Tabor.⁸

(Guzik)

Hos 5:1-15

HOSEA 5 - THE FOLLY OF TRUSTING IN MAN'S DELIVERANCE

A. Israel's sinful idolatry.

1. (Hos_5:1-3) Israel's leaders are rebuked for the sinful state of the nation.

"Hear this, O priests! Take heed, O house of Israel! Give ear, O house of the king! For yours *is* the judgment, because you have been a snare to Mizpah and a net spread on Tabor. The revolvers are deeply involved in slaughter, though I rebuke them all. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me; for now, O Ephraim, you commit harlotry; Israel is defiled."

a. **Hear this, O priests:** When God saw the sinful state of the nation of Israel, He saw that it was because the leaders did not lead in a godly way. It would be tempting for the priests to blame the people, but it was really the fault of the spiritual leadership (**priests**) and political leadership (**house of Israel**) of the nation.

b. **The revoltors are deeply involved in slaughter, though rebuke them all:** The real tragedy of Israel's sin wasn't so much that they stumbled. It was more so that they did not respond to God's **rebuke** when they did stumble. If a man knows how to humbly respond to God's correction, God can always work with him.

2. (Hos_5:4-9) Israel's double desolation.

"They do not direct their deeds toward turning to their God, for the spirit of harlotry is in their midst, and they do not know the LORD. The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them. With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find *Him*; He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have dealt treacherously with the LORD, for they have begotten pagan children. Now a New Moon shall devour them and their heritage. Blow the ram's horn in Gibeah, the trumpet in Ramah! Cry aloud *at* Beth Aven, '*Look* behind you, O Benjamin!'

Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke; among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure."

a. **The pride of Israel testifies to his face:** Like all rebellion, Israel's rebellion was centered on *pride*. They arrogantly thought that what God said didn't really matter compared to their own opinions and desires.

b. **They shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find Him:** When God promised to leave rebellious Israel alone (Hos_4:17), it means that when they make superficial gestures of repentance, **they will not find Him**. Their repentance was superficial because **they do not direct their deeds toward turning to their God**.

i. In many ways today, people *think* they are seeking God when they really aren't. It's just a superficial investigation. For example, a man might say, "I grew up in the Baptist church and couldn't find God there. So I went to the Methodist church and couldn't find God there. Then I went to the Pentecostal church, but couldn't find God there. Now I'm at the Presbyterian church and can't find God." You may imagine you have searched hard after God, but that is an illusion. The truth is that you are running away from God. When He started to get close to you at the Baptist church, you left it and became a Methodist. When He started to get close to you at the Methodist church, you became a Pentecostal. You've followed the same pattern - a superficial search for God that backs away when you really start getting close to God.

ii. **He has withdrawn Himself from them:** It can happen. We can be so set in our sin and rebellion that God just leaves us to ourselves. Usually we don't even notice at first, but when we call upon the LORD and do **not find Him**, then we start to see the result of pushing God away.

c. **Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke:** Because God **has withdrawn Himself from them**, they will find no help or refuge when the Assyrian army attacks. They will be made **desolate**.

B. Israel's sinful trust in man for deliverance.

1. (Hos_5:10-13) Israel and Judah looked to man's wisdom.

"The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark; I will pour out my wrath on them like water. Ephraim is oppressed *and* broken in judgment, because he willingly walked by *human* precept. Therefore I *will be* to Ephraim like a moth, and to the house of Judah like rottenness. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah *saw* his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria and sent to King Jareb; yet he cannot cure you, nor heal you of your wound."

a. **The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark:** This means that the political leaders of Judah

were corrupt and cheaters. They were the kind of men who would change property boundaries to their advantage if they thought they could get away with it. This reminds us that while Judah may have been better than Israel, they still had to repent.

i. "Judah's leaders, however, were not shifting physical property lines but spiritual lines established by God, changing the boundary between right and wrong, between true and false religion, between the true God and the idols." (Wood)

ii. We can imagine a citizen of Judah reading Hosea's prophecy and being a bit smug that their neighbor to the north was so roundly rebuked. God reminds Judah that she has her own sin to deal with.

b. **He willingly walked by human precept:** Ephraim's sinned by living by man's standards and opinions instead of God's. We can't walk **by human precept** unless we first reject God's precepts, and that was exactly what Israel did.

i. **Ephraim went to Assyria:** Israel was foolish enough to trust in man - her eventual conqueror - instead of trusting in God. Choosing a **King Jareb** instead of the LORD is always foolish and ends in ruin.

ii. "'Jareb' is not a known Assyrian's name but means 'warrior'." (Wood)

c. **Like a moth . . . like rottenness:** God will be the one who eats away and corrodes what Israel and Judah have. They will not be blessed, and they will not increase.

2. (Hos_5:14-15) God's judgment and the goal behind it.

"For I *will be* like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, *even I*, will tear *them* and go away; I will take *them* away, and no one shall rescue. I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me."

a. **I will be like a lion:** God's judgment would come against Israel and Judah in subtle ways (*like a moth . . . like*

rottenness). But it would also come in obvious, unmistakable ways. Both a moth and **a lion** bring destruction, just in different ways.

b. **In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me**: This was the goal of God's judgment against Israel. The goal was not destruction, but restoration. Sadly, it is often only in our **affliction** that we **earnestly seek** the LORD. Why not seek the LORD now, before **affliction** forces you to?

(Hos 5:2) Those who revolt are knee-deep in slaughter,⁹

but I will discipline them all.¹⁰

(Hos 5:3) I know Ephraim all too well;¹¹

the evil of¹² Israel is not hidden from me.

For you have engaged in prostitution, O Ephraim;

Israel has defiled itself.¹³

(Hos 5:4) Their wicked deeds do not allow them to return to their God;

because a spirit of idolatry¹⁴ controls their heart,¹⁵

and they do not acknowledge the LORD.

(Hos 5:5) The arrogance of Israel testifies against it;

Israel and Ephraim will be overthrown¹⁶ because¹⁷ of their iniquity.

Even Judah will be brought down¹⁸ with them.

(Hos 5:6) ***The Futility of Sacrificial Ritual without Moral Obedience***

Although they bring their flocks and herds¹⁹

to seek²⁰ the favor of the LORD,²¹

They will not find him —

he has withdrawn himself from them!

(Hos 5:7) They have committed treason²² against the LORD,

because they bore illegitimate children.

Soon²³ the new moon festival will devour them and their fields.

(Hos 5:8) ***The Prophet's Declaration of Judgment***

Blow the ram's horn in Gibeah!

Sound the trumpet in Ramah!

Sound the alarm in Beth Aven!²⁴

Tremble in fear,²⁵ O Benjamin!

(Hos 5:9) Ephraim will be ruined in the day of judgment!²⁶

What I am declaring²⁷ to the tribes of Israel will certainly take place!²⁸

(Hos 5:10) ***The Oppressors of the Helpless Will Be Oppressed***

The princes of Judah are like those who move boundary markers.

I will pour out my rage on them like a torrential flood!²⁹
(Hos 5:11) Ephraim will be oppressed,³⁰ crushed³¹ under judgment,³²

because he was determined to pursue worthless idols.³³
(Hos 5:12) ***The Curse of the Incurable Wound***

I will be like a moth to Ephraim,

like wood rot³⁴ to the house of Judah.
(Hos 5:13) When Ephraim saw³⁵ his sickness

and Judah saw his wound,

then Ephraim turned³⁶ to Assyria,

and begged³⁷ its great king³⁸ for help.

But he will not be able to heal you!

He cannot cure your wound!³⁹
(Hos 5:14) ***The Lion Will Carry Israel Off Into Exile***

I will be like a lion to Ephraim,

like a young lion to the house of Judah.

I myself will tear them to pieces,

then I will carry them off, and no one will be able to rescue them!

(Hos 5:15) Then I will return again to my lair

until they have suffered their punishment.⁴⁰

Then they will seek me;⁴¹

in their distress they will earnestly seek me.

(Hos 6:1) ***Superficial Repentance Breeds False Assurance of God's Forgiveness***

"Come on! Let's return to the LORD!

He himself has torn us to pieces,

but he will heal us!

He has injured¹ us,

but he will bandage our wounds!

(Guzik)

Hos 6:1-11

HOSEA 6 - "COME, LET US RETURN TO THE LORD"

A. A call to return to the LORD.

1. (Hos_6:1-2) Israel should trust in the God who chastened her.

Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight.

a. **He has torn, but He will heal us:** Hosea prays with the right heart in response to the chastening hand of God.

Instead of arguing with God, or resenting His correction, Hosea leads Israel in humble prayer.

i. This is a prayer that trusts the love of God, and sees His loving hand even in correction. Often, a rebellious child will complain that their parents do not love them. Of course, the parents do love the child, but in their rebellion and lack of submission, they can't receive or respond to that love. Hosea prays with a different heart.

b. **After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up:** Hosea prayed this full of confidence in God's love and power to restore. In the prayer, there is a shadowy prophecy of Jesus' resurrection on the **third day**. The context supports this wonderfully; on the cross Jesus was **torn** and **stricken** for our sake, yet He was also gloriously raised up **on the third day**.

2. (Hos_6:3) Walking in confidence.

Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter *and* former rain to the earth.

a. **Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD:** Israel's problem was described back in Hos_4:6 (*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*). Hosea leads the nation in a repentant correction of this problem.

i. We should also know that when we **pursue the knowledge of the Lord**, He blesses it. It must be more than superficial, it must be a pursuit. But when we endeavor to know the Lord, especially through His word, He reveals

Himself to us. *He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* (Heb_11:6)

b. **He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain:** In Israel, the only way crops were watered was by **rain**. So farmer waited for the rain with great anticipation. When we anticipate and wait for God with this kind of earnest expectation, He answers and **will come to us**.

i. Clarke on **the latter and former rain to the earth:** "The first, to prepare the earth for seed; this fell in *autumn*: the second, to prepare the full ear for the harvest; this fell *in spring*."

ii. "Notice, again, it is a repeated gift. He shall give the former rain and the latter rain. If you have had grace once the Lord has more for you. Did you have happy times when old Dr. So-and-so was your pastor? Well, the doctor is dead, but God is not. Were you very much delighted when you used to sit in such-and-such a church, in years gone by, and have you moved into the country now? Yes, but God has not moved. He is in the country as well as in the town. You tell me you had such happy times when you were young. Yes, but God is neither younger nor older. Go to him, for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Do you suppose that, because he gave you the former rain, he has emptied the bottles of heaven?" (Spurgeon)

c. **He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth:** This passage along with others (Deu_11:14, Joe_2:23) were taken to give the name of the "Latter Rain Movement" starting in 1948.

i. In 1948, a Oneness Pentecostal minister named William Branham held meetings at an orphanage and school founded by a Foursquare Church in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. Those attending the meeting were so impressed by the supernatural works - healing, prophecy, word of knowledge, and strange phenomenon - that they

considered it a beginning of a new work of God on earth. In their newsletter, this is how they described it:

“All the great outpourings of the past have had their outstanding truths. Luther’s truth was Justification by Faith. Wesley’s was Sanctification. The Baptists taught the premillennial coming of Christ. The Missionary Alliance taught Divine Healing. The Pentecostal outpouring has restored the Baptism of the Holy Ghost to its rightful place. But the next great outpouring is going to be marked by all these other truths plus such a demonstration of the nine gifts of the Spirit as the world, not even the Apostolic world, has ever witnessed before. This revival will be short and will be the last before the Rapture of the Church.”

ii. They felt that the Pentecostal denominations of their day were “dead” and “dry,” and needed the blessing of the “Latter Rain,” which would especially be marked by miraculous signs and supernatural works. The Pentecostal denominations - notably the Assemblies of God and the Foursquare Church denounced the Branham and the Latter Rain movement for both their teaching and practices.

iii. William Branham continued, drawing large crowds to his prophecy and healing crusades. He and a young evangelist named Oral Roberts led the Latter Rain Movement for several years. Branham’s doctrine became more

and more aberrant. Branham believed that the word of God was given in three forms: the Zodiac, the Egyptian pyramids, and the written scriptures. He also taught the “serpent seed” doctrine, which was based on his interpretation of Gen_3:13, saying that Eve had sexual relations with the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

iv. The Latter Rain Movement, as led by William Branham and Oral Roberts eventually faded from prominence.

Branham himself died in a traffic collision with a drunk driver in 1965. He died on Christmas Eve, and his faithful followers believed that he would rise from the dead, so they

delayed his burial for several days. But the influence of the Latter Rain movement lived on. The Latter Rain popularized many attitudes and doctrines popular in revival movements today:

- The “five-fold ministry” and “restoration of apostle and prophets”
- The “foundational truths” of Heb_6:1-2
- An emphasis on signs and wonders as marks of true revival
- A strong emphasis on unity
- Replacement theology, replacing Israel with the church
- Dominion theology, saying the church will conquer and rule the world
- An elitist attitude, promoting the idea of a group of “superchristians”

v. Many researchers - and many within these modern groups today - believe that many modern “revival” movements are really just a continuation of the Latter Rain movement. Movements such as “Joel’s Army,” the Manifest Sons of God, the Dominion Movement, the Kansas City Prophets, the Toronto Blessing, the Pensacola Revival are connected in some way to the Latter Rain movement. For example, Paul Cain - later to re-emerge as head of the Kansas City Prophets in 1989 - traveled with William Branham and called him “the greatest prophet that ever lived.”

vi. The modern Latter Rain movement believes: “The Latter Rain is God’s great end-time ministry. This concept as revealed in the Bible, comprises the restitution of the church to it’s rightful place, the enormous last day revival and the harvest of souls before the great and terrible Day of the Lord. It is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh promised to us in the last days and the restoration of apostolic and prophetic gifts.” (From latter-rain.com) B. The sin of Israel and Judah.

1. (Hos_6:4-6) How God’s people missed God’s heart.

“O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away. Therefore I have hewn *them* by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and your judgments *are like* light *that* goes forth. For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

a. **Your faithfulness is like a morning cloud:** It wasn't that there was *no faithfulness* among the people of God. It's just that whatever there was quickly dissipated **like the early dew**.

b. **For I desire mercy and not sacrifice:** At this time, God's people were still good at bringing sacrifice (Hos_5:6). But they had forsaken **mercy**, and they abandoned **mercy** because they gave up the knowledge of God and truth (Hos_4:1).

God would rather have right hearts, full of truth and mercy than sacrifice.

i. Jesus twice quoted this passage of Hosea to the religious leaders of His day (Mat_9:13 and Mat_12:7). They also missed the heart of God, focusing on the wrong and superficial things.

c. **And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings:** Israel brought animals for sacrifice, but they never brought themselves as a living sacrifice (Rom_12:1). They missed what God really wants: a deep, close relationship with Him.

2. (Hos_6:7-11) The transgression of idolatry.

“But like men they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt treacherously with Me. Gilead *is* a city of evildoers, *and* defiled with blood. As bands of robbers lie in wait for a man, *so* the company of priests murder on the way to Shechem; surely they commit lewdness. I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel: There *is* the harlotry of Ephraim; Israel is defiled. Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you, when I return the captives of My people.”

a. **As bands of robbers lie in wait for a man, so the company of priests murder:** When the priests went to places of pagan sacrifice, it was a thieving, killing sin.

b. **Judah, a harvest is appointed for you, when I return the captives:** When the people of God came back into the land after the Babylonian exile, they mainly settled in the area of Judah. The **harvest** of returned exiles was mainly for Judah, not for Israel.

(Hos 6:2) He will restore² us in a very short time;³

he will heal us in a little while,⁴

so that we may live in his presence.

(Hos 6:3) So let us acknowledge him!⁵

Let us seek⁶ to acknowledge⁷ the LORD!

He will come to our rescue as certainly as the appearance of the dawn,

as certainly as the winter rain comes,

as certainly as the spring rain that waters the land."

(Hos 6:4) ***Transitory Faithfulness and Imminent Judgment***

What am I going to do with you, O Ephraim?

What am I going to do with you, O Judah?

For⁸ your faithfulness is as fleeting as the morning mist;⁹

it disappears as quickly as dawn's dew!¹⁰

(Hos 6:5) Therefore, I will certainly cut¹¹ you into pieces at the hands of the prophets;¹²

I will certainly kill you¹³ in fulfillment of my oracles of judgment;¹⁴

for¹⁵ my judgment¹⁶ will come forth like the light of the dawn.¹⁷

(Hos 6:6) For I delight in faithfulness, not simply in sacrifice;

I delight¹⁸ in acknowledging God, not simply in whole burnt offerings.¹⁹

(Hos 6:7) ***Indictments Against the Cities of Israel and Judah***

At Adam²⁰ they broke²¹ the covenant;

Oh how²² they were unfaithful²³ to me!

(Hos 6:8) Gilead is a city full of evildoers;²⁴

its streets are stained with bloody footprints!²⁵

(Hos 6:9) The company of priests is like a gang of robbers,

lying in ambush to pounce on a victim.

They commit murder on the road to Shechem;

they have done heinous crimes!

(Hos 6:10) I have seen a disgusting thing in the temple of Israel:

there Ephraim practices temple prostitution

and Judah defiles itself.

(Hos 6:11) I have appointed a time to reap judgment²⁶ for you also, O Judah!

If Israel Would Repent of Sin, God Would Relent of Judgment

Whenever I want to restore the fortunes of my people,²⁷

(Hos 7:1) whenever I want to heal Israel,

the sin of Ephraim is revealed,

and the evil deeds of Samaria are exposed.

For they do what is wrong;

thieves break into houses,

and gangs rob people out in the streets.

(Guzik)

Hos 7:1-16

HOSEA 7 - THE OVEN, THE BREAD, AND THE DOVE

A. A heart like an oven.

1. (Hos_7:1-3) The sinful ignorance and willful blindness of Israel.

“When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they have committed fraud; a thief comes in; a band of robbers takes spoil outside. They do not consider in their hearts *that* I remember all their wickedness; now their own deeds have surrounded them; they are before My face. They make a king glad with their wickedness, and princes with their lies.”

a. **They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness:** The problem among the people and leaders of Israel was they forgot - willfully - that the LORD saw and remembered their sin. We often deliberately forget that the LORD sees and remembers when we sin. It may be secret before men, but not before God - He says, “**they are before My face.**”

i. Have you forgotten? Do you think God doesn't see? Do you think God is blind to your adultery or pre-marital sex? Do you think your pornography habit goes unnoticed? Do you think God's eyes are closed when you get drunk or take drugs? There are many church-going people today who think that God forgets or never sees such things, because they do them and then they come to church and make a profession of godliness, pretending that those things are never part of their life.

ii. There is a precious promise for those who come to God under the New Covenant: *For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.* (Jer_31:34) We often wish that time would make God forget our sin, but it doesn't. Only the atoning substitute of Jesus, crucified in our place under the New Covenant makes God forget our sin.

b. **When I would have healed Israel:** God was willing to heal Israel from their sin and its effects, but not as long as they acted as if God did not see their sin. They had to treat God as He really is, a God who sees and remembers unrepentant, uncovered sin.

c. **They make a king glad with their wickedness . . .**
princes have made him sick . . . all their kings have fallen:

The phrases probably all refer to one of the successful assassination plots against the throne of Israel during the ministry of Hosea. Since there were four kings violently overthrown during his ministry, it's hard to pin down which one he means.

2. (Hos_7:4-7) Israel's heart is inflamed after idols.

"They *are* all adulterers. Like an oven heated by a baker; he ceases stirring *the fire* after kneading the dough, until it is leavened. In the day of our king princes have made *him* sick, inflamed with wine; he stretched out his hand with scoffers. They prepare their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait; their baker sleeps all night; in the morning it burns like a flaming fire. They are all hot, like an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings have fallen. None among them calls upon Me."

a. **Like an oven heated by a baker:** Israel was inflamed with desire and passion after idols like the coals of a freshly stoked fire, ready to bake bread.

i. Paul used the same image of "burning lust" in 1Co_7:9 :
but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry.
For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

b. **None among them calls upon Me:** Israel could not be **hot, like an oven** after idols and also call upon the LORD. They did in fact continue to sacrifice to the LORD (Hos_5:6) but it was empty ceremony, not a true calling upon the LORD.

3. (Hos_7:8-10) The pride and stubbornness of Israel.

"Ephraim has mixed himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake unturned. Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know *it*; yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know *it*. And the pride of Israel testifies to his face, but they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek Him for all this."

a. **Ephraim is a cake unturned:** The idea is of a “half-baked” cake. In that day, bread was often prepared as a cake that was cooked on both sides, something like a pancake. In thinking they can serve both the Lord and idols, Israel is like an **unturnd** pancake - burned on one side, uncooked on the other.

b. **Aliens have devoured his strength, but he does not know it:** This makes the tragedy of Israel’s ruin worse. The nation is being ravaged by sin but **does not know it**. They should know it, because even **the pride of Israel testifies to his face** - yet in their blind ignorance **they do not return to the LORD their God**.

i. Man has an amazing ability to deceive himself when he is in sin. Well did Jeremiah say, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?* (Jer_17:9). Considering how easily we deceive our self, and how our sin can be apparent to everyone but us, Israel’s condition isn’t unusual:

- Burned and ruined - but he does not know it
- Strength devoured - but he does not know it
- Aging and weakening - but he does not know it
- Pride testifies against him - but he does not know it

ii. It was said of Samson after Delilah cut his hair: *But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him* (Jdg_16:20).

This is where the people of Israel - and some followers of God today - were. They are far from God

and already suffering the effects, but they can’t see it.

c. **Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, yet he does not know it:** Israel is as foolish as an old man who thinks and acts like he is still young. “He began but to decline and decay, as a man doth when he grows toward 50.” (John Trapp, 1654) B. Silly like a dove.

1. (Hos_7:11-12) Like a dove, Israel flies about to the nations.

“Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. Wherever they go, I will spread My

net on them; I will bring them down like birds of the air; I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard.”

a. **Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without sense:**

Hosea piles image upon image. Now Israel is like a bird fluttering about, confused and without direction. They think they can escape God by running to other nations, but the Lord says, “**I will spread My net on them.**”

b. **I will chastise them according to what their congregation has heard:** Israel’s guilt is increased **according to what** they have **heard**. Greater knowledge means great accountability. As Jesus said, *for everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

(Luk_12:48)

2. (Hos_7:13-16) In running to the nations, Israel has run *away* from God.

“Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction to them, because they have transgressed against Me! Though I redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against Me. They did not cry out to Me with their heart when they wailed upon their beds. They assemble together for grain and new wine, they rebel against Me; though I disciplined *and* strengthened their arms, yet they devise evil against Me; they return, *but* not to the Most High; they are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword for the cursings of their tongue. This *shall be* their derision in the land of Egypt.”

a. **They return, but not the Most High:** Israel saw their *problem*, but not their *sin*. When God’s hand is against man, he easily sees he has a problem but often does not see it as *sin against the LORD*. So when Israel had problems, they **wailed upon their beds**, but not to the LORD. They sought remedies, but not from **the Most High**.

b. **They are like a treacherous bow:** Hosea adds another image, of a faulty bow that won't shoot an arrow straight. Everything that comes from Israel misses the mark, because **they are like a treacherous bow**. They are like a useless and dangerous weapon.
(Hos 7:2) They do not realize¹

that I remember all of their wicked deeds.

Their evil deeds have now surrounded them;

their sinful deeds are always before me.²
(Hos 7:3) ***Political Intrigue and Conspiracy in the Palace***

The royal advisers delight the king with their evil schemes,

the princes make him glad with their lies.
(Hos 7:4) They are all like bakers,³

they⁴ are like a smoldering oven;

they are like a baker who does not stoke the fire

until the kneaded dough is ready for baking.
(Hos 7:5) At the celebration⁵ of their king,⁶

his princes become inflamed⁷ with wine;

they conspire⁸ with evildoers.
(Hos 7:6) They approach him, all the while plotting against him.

Their hearts are like an oven;

their anger smolders all night long,

but in the morning it bursts into a flaming fire.
(Hos 7:7) All of them are blazing like an oven;

they devour their rulers.

All of their kings fall —

and none of them call on me!

(Hos 7:8) ***Israel Lacks Discernment and Refuses to Repent***

Ephraim has mixed itself like flour⁹ among the nations;

Ephraim is like a ruined cake of bread that is scorched on one side.¹⁰

(Hos 7:9) Foreigners are consuming what his strenuous labor produced,¹¹

but he does not recognize it!

His head is filled with gray hair,

but he does not realize it!
(Hos 7:10) The arrogance of Israel testifies against him,

yet they refuse to return to the LORD their God!

In spite of all this they refuse to seek him!
(Hos 7:11) ***Israel Turns to Assyria and Egypt for Help***

Ephraim has been like a dove,

easily deceived and lacking discernment.

They called to Egypt for help;

they turned to Assyria for protection.
(Hos 7:12) I will throw my bird net over them while they are flying,

I will bring them down like birds in the sky;

I will discipline them when I hear them flocking together.
(Hos 7:13) ***Israel Has Turned Away from the Lord***

Woe to them! For they have fled from me!

Destruction to them! For they have rebelled against me!

I want to deliver¹² them,

but they have lied to me.

(Hos 7:14) They do not pray to me,¹³

but howl in distress on their beds;

They slash themselves¹⁴ for grain and new wine,

but turn away from me.

(Hos 7:15) Although I trained and strengthened them,¹⁵

they plot evil against me!

(Hos 7:16) They turn to Baal;¹⁶

they are like an unreliable bow.

Their leaders will fall by the sword

because their prayers to Baal¹⁷ have made me angry.

So people will disdain them in the land of Egypt.¹⁸

(Hos 8:1) ***God Will Raise Up the Assyrians to Attack Israel***

Sound the alarm!¹

An eagle² looms over the temple of the LORD!

For they have broken their covenant with me,³

and have rebelled against my law.
(Guzik)

Hos 8:1-14

HOSEA 8 - SOW THE WIND, REAP THE WHIRLWIND

A. Sowing idolatry, reaping exile.

1. (Hos_8:1-6) Casting off God and embracing idols.

“Set the trumpet to your mouth! *He shall come* like an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law. Israel will cry to Me, ‘My God, we know You!’ Israel has rejected the good; the enemy will pursue him. They set up kings, but not by Me; they made princes, but I did not acknowledge *them*. From their silver and gold they made idols for themselves; that they might be cut off. Your calf is rejected, O Samaria! My anger is aroused against them; how long until they attain to innocence? For from Israel *is* even this: A workman made it, and it *is* not God; but the calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces.”

a. **Set the trumpet to your mouth!** Trumpets were used to assemble God’s people and to call troops to battle. Here, God commands the **trumpet** to sound to gather the mighty Assyrians against Israel for judgment, **because they have transgressed My covenant**.

b. **Israel will cry to Me, “My God, we know You!”** But their cry is not sincere, because **Israel has rejected the good**. They set up rulers and princes against the Lord, and were steeped in idolatry.

i. **My God, we know You!** But they didn’t really know God. It will be the same way for many church-goers today. Jesus said, *“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* (Mat_7:22-23)

c. **They set up kings, but not by Me:** “To choose leaders without the direction of God is not only sinful, it is foolish.

Those who follow their own wisdom in the choice of leaders inevitably get what they deserve.” (Boice)

d. **The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces:** Israel made beautiful idols out of silver and gold, but they will not stand. In judgment, God will break them **to pieces**.

i. **Your calf is rejected** “is literally ‘your calf stinks.’” (Wood) That’s what God thought of their idols!

2. (Hos_8:7-10) Israel judged and regathered.

“They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind. The stalk has no bud; it shall never produce meal. If it should produce, aliens would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up; now they are among the Gentiles like a vessel in which *is* no pleasure. For they have gone up to Assyria, *like* a wild donkey alone by itself; Ephraim has hired lovers. Yes, though they have hired among the nations, now I will gather them; and they shall sorrow a little, because of the burden of the king of princes.”

a. **They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind:** It will seem to Israel that the judgement they receive is worse than the sin they committed. This isn’t true in the sense of God being worse to us than our sin deserves, but it is true in how judgment feels. This is usually because our sin is *sown* over a long period of time, but often *reaped* in a contracted period of judgment.

b. **Now they are among the Gentiles . . . now I will gather them:** God promised that Israel would face the conquering Assyrians and exile, but also that He would one day **gather them** again. This note of mercy is sprinkled through the song warning of judgment.

B. Why God will not accept their offerings.

1. (Hos_8:11-13) Israel considers God’s word a **strange thing**.

“Because Ephraim has made many altars for sin, they have become for him altars for sinning. I have written for him the great things of My law, *but* they were considered a strange thing. *For* the sacrifices of My offerings they sacrifice flesh

and eat *it*, *but* the LORD does not accept them. Now He will remember their iniquity and punish their sins. They shall return to Egypt.”

a. **They have become for him altars for sinning:** Israel foolishly built **many altars for sin**. So it is no surprise that those altars became **altars for sinning**. When we give ourselves opportunity and occasion for sin, it is never surprising when we end up **sinning**.

b. **I have written for him the great things of My law, but they were considered a strange thing:** In their sin and idolatry, Israel also rejected the Word of God. God had **great things** for Israel, but they seemed like a **strange thing** because their hearts were far from God.

c. **I have written for him:** This tells us the *author* of the Bible - God Himself. Spurgeon said it well: “This volume is the writing of the living God: each fetter was penned with an Almighty finger; each word in it dropped from the everlasting lips, each sentence was dictated by the Holy Spirit.”

i. “If this be the Word of God, what will become of some of you who have not read it for the last month? Most people treat the Bible very politely . . . When they get home, they lay it up in a drawer till next Sunday morning; then it comes out again for a little bit of a treat and goes to chapel; that is all the poor Bible gets in the way of an airing. That is your style of entertaining this heavenly messenger. There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write “damnation” with your fingers.” (Spurgeon)

d. **The great things of My law:** This tells us the *content* of the Bible - **great things**. “The Bible treats of great things, and of great things only. There is nothing in this Bible which is unimportant. Every verse in it has a solemn meaning, and if we have not found it out yet, we hope yet to do it.” (Spurgeon)

e. **But they were considered a strange thing:** This tells us the way the Bible is received by the *natural man*. Paul expressed the same idea in 1Co_2:14 : *But*

the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The Word of God and the things of the spirit are **great things**, but seem like a **strange thing** when man is in sin and idolatry.

i. Sometimes people reject the Bible because they think “science” is superior. “But the science of Jesus Christ is the most excellent of sciences. Let no one turn away from the Bible, because it is not a book of learning and wisdom. It is. Would ye know astronomy? It is here: it tells you of the Sun of Righteousness and the Star of Bethlehem.

Would you know botany? It is here: it tells you of the plant of renown-the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon.

Would you know geology and mineralogy? You shall learn it here: for you may read of the Rock of Ages, and the

White Stone with a name graven thereon, which no man knoweth, saying he that receiveth it. Would ye study

history? Here is the most ancient of all the records of the history of the human race. Whatever your science is, come and bend o’er this book; your science is here.” (Spurgeon)

f. **But the LORD does not accept them:** Sure, they still brought sacrifices to the LORD. But it was all just an outward ceremony because they were still steeped in sin and idolatry. Therefore their sin remained uncovered, and God will **remember their iniquity and punish their sins.**

2. (Hos_8:14) When God’s people forget their Maker, there is no refuge.

“For Israel has forgotten his Maker, and has built temples; Judah also has multiplied fortified cities; but I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces.”

a. **For Israel has forgotten his Maker:** Israel **built temples**, but not unto the LORD who made them. Therefore, the judgment described in this chapter is coming upon them.

b. **Judah also has multiplied fortified cities:** While Israel practiced outright idolatry, Judah was guilty of a more subtle

sin. They trusted in the **fortified cities** they built against the Assyrians. Those **cities** would be of no help (**I will send fire upon his cities**), and the only the LORD would preserve Judah from total destruction (Isa_37:33-36).

i. Perhaps we can capture some of the ungodly heart of Israel and Judah by examining our own attraction to bigness and nice facilities. What could be wrong with success and nice buildings? They easily become idols if your heart turns from God. If God brings size and great buildings, it is wonderful - as long as we don't turn our eyes of Him, making those things idols.
(Hos 8:2) Israel cries out to me,

"My God, we acknowledge you!"

(Hos 8:3) But Israel has rejected what is morally good;

so an enemy will pursue him.

(Hos 8:4) ***The Political and Cultic Sin of Israel***

They enthroned kings without my consent!⁴

They appointed princes without my approval!⁵

They made idols out of their silver and gold,

but they will be destroyed!⁶

(Hos 8:5) O Samaria, he has rejected your calf idol!

My anger burns against them!

They will not survive much longer without being punished,⁷

even though they are Israelites!
(Hos 8:6) That idol was made by a workman — it is not God!

The calf idol of Samaria will be broken to bits.
(Hos 8:7) ***The Fertility Cultists Will Become Infertile***

They sow the wind,

and so they will reap the whirlwind!

The stalk does not have any standing grain;

it will not produce any flour.

Even if it were to yield grain,

foreigners would swallow it all up.
(Hos 8:8) Israel will be swallowed up among the nations;

they will be like a worthless piece of pottery.
(Hos 8:9) ***The Willful Donkey and the Wanton Harlot***

They have gone up to Assyria,

like a wild donkey that wanders off.

Ephraim has hired prostitutes as lovers.⁸
(Hos 8:10) Even though they have hired lovers among the nations,⁹

I will soon gather them together for judgment.¹⁰

Then¹¹ they will begin to waste away

under the oppression of a mighty king.¹²
(Hos 8:11) ***Sacrifices Ineffective without Moral Obedience***

Although Ephraim has built many altars for sin offerings,

these have become altars for sinning!
(Hos 8:12) I spelled out my law for him in great detail,

but they regard it as something totally unknown¹³ to them!
(Hos 8:13) They offer up sacrificial gifts to me,

and eat the meat,

but the LORD does not accept their sacrifices.¹⁴

Soon he will remember their wrongdoing,

he will punish their sins,

and they will return to Egypt.

(Hos 8:14) Israel has forgotten his Maker and built royal palaces,

and Judah has built many fortified cities.

But I will send fire on their cities;

it will consume their royal citadels.

(Hos 9:1) ***Fertility Cult Festivals Have Intoxicated Israel***

O Israel, do not rejoice jubilantly¹ like the nations,

for you are unfaithful² to your God.

You love to receive a prostitute's wages³

on all the floors where you thresh your grain.

(Guzik)

Hos 9:1-17

HOSEA 9 - EXILED AND DRIED UP

A. Israel exiled in judgment.

1. (Hos_9:1-4) The end of the good life in Israel.

Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like *other* peoples, for you have played the harlot against your God. You have made love *for* hire on every threshing floor. The threshing floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her. They shall not dwell in the Lord's land, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and shall eat unclean *things* in Assyria. They shall not offer wine *offerings* to the LORD, nor shall their sacrifices be pleasing to Him. *It shall be* like

bread of mourners to them; all who eat it shall be defiled. For their bread *shall be* for their *own* life; it shall not come into the house of the LORD.

a. **Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like other peoples:** At the time Hosea brought this prophecy, things perhaps were not so bad in Israel. Maybe there were plenty of fun and good times among the people. But they shouldn't rejoice **like other peoples**, because judgment was on the way.

i. "It was probably the case, though we do not know this for sure, that Hosea delivered the opening part of this oracle as a sermon on the occasion of a harvest festival . . . characterized by feasting, mirth, and dancing." (Boice)

b. **You have made love for hire on every threshing floor:** Israel practiced idolatry on the **threshing floor**, a place where grain was processed. They worshipped idols here because they believed that it helped the harvest. Because of their idolatry, the LORD would curse their harvest, and **the threshing floor and the winepress shall not feed them.**

c. **They shall not dwell in the Lord's land:** Not only would God curse their grain and grape harvest, but He would also cast them out of the land in exile to both Egypt and Assyria. In the lands of exile there would be no bread or food for sacrifice to the LORD, only for survival (**their bread shall be for their own life**).

2. (Hos_9:5-9) The days of Israel's punishment in Egypt.

What will you do in the appointed day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD? For indeed they are gone because of destruction.

Egypt shall gather them up; Memphis shall bury them. Nettles shall possess their valuables of silver; thorns *shall be* in their tents.

The days of punishment have come; the days of recompense have come. Israel knows! The prophet *is* a fool, the spiritual man *is* insane, because of the greatness of your iniquity and

great enmity. The watchman of Ephraim *is* with my God; but the prophet *is* a fowler's snare in all his ways; enmity in the house of his God. They are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity; He will punish their sins.

a. **They are gone because of destruction:** Israel did not honor the LORD in their **appointed** feast days, so they LORD will take them away. In their lands of exile, they will not be able to honor the feasts of the LORD.

b. **The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is insane:** This is what the people of Israel said about Hosea. When things prospered and everyone was happy, Hosea announced coming judgment and called for repentance. They thought he was a fool and crazy.

i. "They said in effect, 'Who in his right mind would prophesy a judgment like this when we are in the midst of such a bountiful harvest, in itself a proof of God's blessing?'" (Boice)

c. **As in the days of Gibeah:** Judges 19 describes horrific crimes of perversion and violence in Israel in the days of the Judges. Hosea says that in his day it is just as bad in Israel.

B. Israel barren and dried up in judgment.

1. (Hos_9:10-14) God sends barrenness and bereavement.

"I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. *But* they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves *to that* shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved. *As for* Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird; no birth, no pregnancy, and no conception! Though they bring up their children, yet I will bereave them to the last man. Yes, woe to them when I depart from them! Just as I saw Ephraim like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place, so Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer." Give them, O LORD; what will You give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts!

a. **Like grapes in the wilderness . . . as the firstfruits on the fig tree:** God fondly remembers the days when Israel was faithful and fruitful unto Him. **Grapes in the wilderness** and the **firstfruits on the fig tree** are unexpected blessings. There was a time when Israel was something special to God, as if one found luscious **grapes in the wilderness**.

i. "While they were faithful, they were as *acceptable* to me as *ripe grapes* would be to a *thirsty traveler* in the desert."

(Clarke) b. **But they went to Baal Peor:** Israel's sin and idolatry in the days of Hosea is like their sin at **Baal Peor** in Numbers 25, associated with sexual immorality and idolatry.

c. **They became an abomination like the thing they loved:** Israel loved their disgraceful idols, and they have become like them. We will become like the god we love and serve, whether it is the Lord or like an **abomination**.

d. **No birth, no pregnancy, and no conception:** In contrast to their past fruitfulness, now Israel will experience barrenness and bereavement (**I will be bereave them to the last man**), given to them by the God they rejected.

e. **Give them, O LORD - What will You give?** The idea is that Hosea began an angry prayer against the people ("**Give them, O LORD**"), then he stopped because he checked his heart and didn't know what to pray ("**What will you give?**").

In the end, he asked for **a miscarrying womb and dry breasts**. Really, Hosea prayed for mercy. Knowing the coming judgment, he prayed "LORD, give them few children so those children will not have to face the horrors of Your coming judgment."

i. Sometimes those who see themselves - perhaps accurately - as more spiritual and closer to God than others in a church or group get angry and frustrated with those who don't seem to have hearts burning for the LORD. Their frustration is understandable but the pause in Hosea's prayer should give them pause. It is a good thing to long for

revival and spiritual passion among God's people, but if that makes us proud, angry, or bitter against others then Satan has won a great victory.

2. (Hos_9:15-17) God sends dryness and wandering upon Israel.

"All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal, for there I hated them. Because of the evil of their deeds I will drive them from My house; I will love them no more. All their princes *are* rebellious. Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up; they shall bear no fruit. Yes, were they to bear children, I would kill the darlings of their womb." My God will cast them away, because they did not obey Him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

a. **All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them:** As mentioned before in Hos_4:15, God despised the city of **Gilgal** as a center of idolatry in Israel. At one time, **Gilgal** was a place where prophets were trained under Elijah and Elisha (2Ki_2:1; 2Ki_4:38). But in Hosea's day it had become a center of false worship (Hos_4:15; Hos_12:11; Amo_4:4; Amo_5:5).

b. **I will drive them from My house:** In this sense, exile was the perfect punishment for Israel. They had disgraced God's **house**, His land, so He would "evict" them.

c. **They shall bear no fruit . . . I would kill the beloved fruit of their womb:** One of the major reasons Israel went after idols like Baal and Ashtoreth was because those gods were thought to bring fertility and fruitfulness. God reminds Israel that He is really the Lord over the womb, and that He will turn their fruitfulness into barrenness.

d. **My God will cast them away, because they did not obey Him:** This is exactly what the Lord promised under the terms of the Old Covenant (Deu_30:24-28). Thankfully, we can come to God by faith in a new and better covenant, where He promises to remember our sins no more (Heb_8:12; Heb_10:16-17).

(Hos 9:2) Threshing floors and wine vats will not feed the people,⁴

and new wine only deceives them.⁵

(Hos 9:3) ***Assyrian Exile Will Reverse the Egyptian Exodus***

They will not remain in the LORD's land.

Ephraim will return to Egypt;

they will eat ritually unclean food in Assyria.

(Hos 9:4) They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the LORD;

they will not please him with their sacrifices.

Their sacrifices will be like bread eaten while in mourning;

all those who eat them will make themselves ritually unclean.

For their bread will be only to satisfy their appetite;

it will not come into the temple of the LORD.

(Hos 9:5) So what will you do on the festival day,

on the festival days of the LORD?

(Hos 9:6) ***No Escape for the Israelites This Time!***

Look!⁶ Even if⁷ they flee from the destruction,

Egypt will take hold⁸ of them,

and Memphis will bury them.

The weeds will inherit the silver they treasure⁹ —

thorn bushes will occupy their homes.¹⁰

(Hos 9:7) The time of judgment¹¹ is about to arrive!¹²

The time of retribution¹³ is imminent!¹⁴

Let Israel know!¹⁵

Israel Rejects Hosea's Prophetic Exhortations

The prophet is considered a fool¹⁶ —

the inspired man¹⁷ is viewed as a madman¹⁸ —

because of the multitude of your sins

and your intense¹⁹ animosity.

(Hos 9:8) The prophet²⁰ is a watchman²¹ over Ephraim²² on behalf of God,²³

yet traps²⁴ are laid for him along all of his paths;²⁵

animosity rages against him in the land²⁶ of his God.

(Hos 9:9) ***The Best of Times, the Worst of Times***

They have sunk deep into corruption²⁷

as in the days of Gibeah.

He will remember their wrongdoing.

He will repay them for their sins.

(Hos 9:10) When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the wilderness.

I viewed your ancestors²⁸ like an early fig on a fig tree in its first season.

Then they came to Baal-Peor and they dedicated themselves to shame —

they became as detestable as what they loved.

(Hos 9:11) ***The Fertility Worshipers Will Become Infertile***

Ephraim will be like a bird;

what they value²⁹ will fly away.

They will not bear children —

they will not enjoy pregnancy —

they will not even conceive!³⁰

(Hos 9:12) Even if they raise their children,

I will take away every last one of them.³¹

Woe to them!

For I will turn away from them.

(Hos 9:13) Just as lion cubs are born predators,³²

so Ephraim will bear his sons for slaughter.

(Hos 9:14) Give them, O LORD —

what will you give them?

Give them wombs that miscarry,

and breasts that cannot nurse!³³

(Hos 9:15) Because of all their evil in Gilgal,

I hate them there.

On account of their evil deeds,

I will drive them out of my land.³⁴

I will no longer love them;

all their rulers are rebels.

(Hos 9:16) Ephraim will be struck down³⁵ —

their root will be dried up;

they will not yield any fruit.

Even if they do bear children,

I will kill their precious offspring.

(Hos 9:17) My God will reject them,

for they have not obeyed him;

so they will be fugitives among the nations.

(Hos 10:1) ***Israel is Guilty of Fertility Cult Worship***

Israel was a fertile vine

that yielded fruit.

As his fruit multiplied,
he multiplied altars to Baal.¹

As his land prospered,

they adorned the fertility pillars.
(Guzik)

Hos 10:1-15

HOSEA 10 - ISRAEL HAS NO KING

A. The analysis of Israel's sinful state.

1. (Hos_10:1-2) Israel's empty vine.

Israel empties *his* vine; he brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; According to the bounty of his land they have embellished *his* sacred pillars. Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty. He will break down their altars; He will ruin their sacred pillars.

a. **He brings forth fruit for himself:** God blessed Israel with material abundance, but they spent it on themselves and their own idolatrous desires (**he has increased the altars**). Israel enjoyed the blessing of God, but used those blessings in ungodly ways.

i. Paul warns against the same sin in Gal_5:13 : *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh*. Sometimes as Christians we take the liberty and blessing God gives and use them in ungodly ways.

b. **Their heart is divided; now they are held guilty:** Because Israel has received blessing, they were more

responsible than ever to use it wisely. Because they used God's bounty in wicked ways, God will **break down their altars** to pagan gods and **ruin their sacred pillars** made unto idols.

i. **Their heart is divided:** The word **divided** is *halaq*, which has the ideas of "**divided**" (Gen_14:15; Gen_49:7), of "smooth" (Gen_27:11, Psa_55:21) or of "flattering" (Psa_5:9; Psa_36:2). So, it may be accurate to translate this phrase as **their heart is divided**, but it may also be that God wants to say that Ephraim has a "smooth, flattering," insincere heart.

ii. The idea of Israel's "smooth" or "insincere" heart is reflected by the adulteries of Hosea's wife Gomer earlier in the book. In the same way that an unfaithful spouse will *say* they love their partner, all the while living a lie, is the same way Israel's heart was towards God.

iii. Israel had this divided, insincere heart and expressed it on the altars of idolatry. Now, **He will break down their altars**. "Now GOD will do in *judgment* what *they* should have done in *contrition*, 'break down their altars, and spoil their images.'" (Clarke) 2. (Hos_10:3-8) Israel's empty throne.

For now they say, "We have no king, because we did not fear the LORD. And as for a king, what would he do for us?" They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant. Thus judgment springs up like hemlock in the furrows of the field. The inhabitants of Samaria fear because of the calf of Beth Aven. For its people mourn for it, and its priests shriek for it; because its glory has departed from it. *The idol* also shall be carried to Assyria *as* a present for King Jareb. Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off like a twig on the water. Also the high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars; they shall say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall on us!"

a. **We have no king:** Under the judgment of the LORD, foreign powers dominated Israel so they no longer had their own king. Even the idols they honored and trusted so much will be taken to foreign lands as treasure for foreign kings.

b. **The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars:** After the desolation of exile, the once-busy pagan altars of Israel are now overgrown with thorns and thistles. This is the result of Israel's rejection of the LORD and embrace of pagan gods.

B. God's counsel to sinful Israel.

1. (Hos_10:9-11) God tells Israel to see their sin and to submit to His chastening.

"O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah; there they stood. The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them. When *it is* My desire, I will chasten them. Peoples shall be gathered against them when I bind them for their two transgressions. Ephraim *is* a trained heifer that loves to thresh *grain*; but I harnessed her fair neck, I will make Ephraim pull *a plow*. Judah shall plow; Jacob shall break his clods."

a. **You have sinned from the days of Gibeah: Gibeah** was already mentioned in Hos_9:9, recalling the horrific sin described in Judges 19. Even though there was a **battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity**, there was still iniquity in Israel. Here, God wants a willfully blind Israel to see their sin and repent of it.

b. **When it is My desire, I will chasten them:** Like unruly farm animals, God will control and guide Israel and Jacob, even if they kick against Him.

2. (Hos_10:12) God tells Israel to break up the hard ground of their heart.

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

a. **Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy:** Israel had sown the seed of sin, and they would soon reap

judgment from God. Even now, if they would sow **righteousness**, they would **reap in mercy** at the next harvest.

i. We all sow into our life but do we **sow** seeds of **righteousness**? What “crop” will grow up from the seeds planted today, or this past week, or this past month?

b. **Break up your fallow ground**: God builds on the picture of sowing and reaping by telling Israel to **break up your fallow ground** - ground that hasn’t been plowed for more than a year. It is ground that is hard and stubborn, resistant to the seed. It does little good to sow seed on **fallow ground**; it must be broken up first.

i. Sometimes when the word of God goes forth and seems to have little effect, it is because it falls on **fallow ground** - the hard ground that will not allow the seed of the word to penetrate and become fruitful.

ii. Since **fallow ground** is hard, it probably doesn’t “want” to be broken up. It is hard and compact, and the blade of the plow hurts as it cuts through. If the **fallow ground** could talk, it would probably cry out when it is plowed.

Yet it is useless as ground as long as it is **fallow**.

iii. **For it is time to seek the LORD** reminds us of *how* we break up the fallow ground. We do it by seeking the LORD, not our self or idols.

iv. **For it is time** shows that the time to break up the fallow ground is *now*. “This should be immediately done: the season is passing; and if you do not get the seed in the ground, the early rain will be past, and your fields will be unfruitful.” (Clarke)

c. **Till He comes and rains righteousness on you**: This tells us how long we should break up the fallow ground and sow the seed of righteousness. We do it until the harvest comes.

i. God use of the figures of sowing and reaping remind us that harvest is sometimes a season away. Sometimes

people expect to sow sin for years, but to immediately **reap in mercy** after sowing **righteousness** for one day.

Stick with sowing in righteousness, you will **reap in mercy** in due time.

3. (Hos_10:13-15) God tells Israel the terrible result of resisting Him.

You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men. Therefore tumult shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be plundered as Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle; a mother dashed in pieces upon *her* children. Thus it shall be done to you, O

Bethel, because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel shall be cut off utterly.

a. **Because you trusted in your own way:** This is the essence of all sin. We trust in our **own way** instead of in God's way. Ruin always comes when we trust in our **own way** instead of God's way, and that ruin was about to come upon Israel.

(Hos 10:2) Their heart is slipping;

soon they will be punished for their guilt.

The LORD² will break their altars;

he will completely destroy their fertility pillars.

(Hos 10:3) ***The Lord Will Punish Israel by Removing Its Kings***

Very soon they will say, "We have no king

since we did not fear the LORD.

But what can a king do for us anyway?"
(Hos 10:4) They³ utter empty words,⁴

taking⁵ false oaths and making empty⁶ agreements.

Therefore legal disputes sprout up

like poisonous weeds⁷ in the furrows of a plowed field.
(Hos 10:5) ***The Calf Idol and Idolaters of Samaria Will Be Exiled***

The inhabitants⁸ of Samaria will lament⁹ over the calf idol¹⁰ of Beth Aven.¹¹

Its people will mourn over it;

its idolatrous priests will wail¹² over it,¹³

because its splendor will be taken from them¹⁴ into exile.
(Hos 10:6) Even the calf idol¹⁵ will be carried to Assyria,

as tribute for the great king.¹⁶

Ephraim will be disgraced;

Israel will be put to shame because¹⁷ of its wooden idol.¹⁸
(Hos 10:7) Samaria and its king will be carried off¹⁹

like a twig²⁰ on the surface of the waters.
(Hos 10:8) The high places of the "House²¹ of Wickedness"²² will be destroyed;

it is the place where Israel sins.

Thorns and thistles will grow up over its altars.

Then they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!"

and to the hills, "Fall on us!"

(Hos 10:9) ***Failure to Learn from the Sin and Judgment of Gibeah***

O Israel, you have sinned since the time²³ of Gibeah,

and there you have remained.

Did not war overtake the evildoers in Gibeah?

(Hos 10:10) When I please,²⁴ I will discipline them;²⁵

I will gather nations together to attack them,²⁶

to bind them in chains²⁷ for their two sins.²⁸

(Hos 10:11) ***Fertility Imagery: Plowing, Sowing, and Reaping***

Ephraim was a well-trained heifer who loved to thresh grain;

I myself put a fine yoke²⁹ on her neck.

I will harness Ephraim.

Let Judah plow!³⁰

Let Jacob break up³¹ the unplowed ground for himself!
(Hos 10:12) Sow righteousness for yourselves,

reap unfailing love.

Break up the unplowed ground for yourselves,

for it is time to seek the LORD,

until he comes and showers deliverance³² on you.
(Hos 10:13) But you have plowed wickedness;

you have reaped injustice;

you have eaten the fruit of deception.

Because you have depended on your chariots;³³

you have relied³⁴ on your many warriors.
(Hos 10:14) ***Bethel Will Be Destroyed Like Beth Arbel***

The roar of battle will rise against your people;

all your fortresses will be devastated,

just as Shalman devastated³⁵ Beth Arbel on the day of battle,

when mothers were dashed to the ground with their children.

(Hos 10:15) So will it happen to you, O Bethel,³⁶

because of your great wickedness!

When that day dawns,³⁷

the king of Israel will be destroyed.³⁸

(Hos 11:1) ***Reversal of the Exodus: Return to Egypt and Exile in Assyria***

When Israel was a young man, I loved him like a son,¹

and I summoned my son² out of Egypt.

(Guzik)

Hos 11:1-12

HOSEA 11 - DRAWN WITH GENTLE CORDS

A. God's tender love for Israel.

1. (Hos_11:1-2) Israel: Called by God and called by the Baals.

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son. As they called them, so they went from them; they sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved images."

a. **I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son:** God remembers His tender love for Israel, when more than 500

years before the time of Hosea He brought them out of **Egypt**.

i. This is an “unexpected prophecy” fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Mat_2:15 shows how the words **out of Egypt I called My son** were fulfilled when the child Jesus return from Egypt after escaping there on the eve of Herod’s massacre of the innocents.

b. **As they called them, so they went from them:** God called Israel out of Egypt, but the idolatry of the Baals called to Israel, and they forsook the LORD and followed the Baals (the local deities of Canaan).

2. (Hos_11:3-4) God’s tender love for an unseeing Israel.

“I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped *and* fed them.”

a. **I taught Ephraim to walk . . . but they did not know that I healed them:** God does so much for His people that they are unaware of. Often we attribute some blessing directly from the hand of God to some other source.

i. **Taking them by their arms:** The picture is of a parent teaching a child how to walk by holding the child’s arms and supporting the child as they make their awkward steps.

b. **I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love:** Even when God draws His people, it is with **gentle cords of love**, not with harsh manipulation or coercion. God wants to win us over, but not will brute force.

i. Clarke on **gentle cords**: “This is a reference to *leading strings*, one end of which is held by the child, the other by the nurse, by which the little one, feeling some support, and gaining confidence, endeavours to walk. God, their heavenly Father, made use of every means and method to teach them to walk in the right and only safe path.”

ii. In the ancient world, the empires of Persia and Greece fought bitter wars. There was said to be a great difference

between their soldiers. In the Persian army, soldiers were like slaves and driven into battle with whips and threats.

In the Greek army, soldiers were free men and patriots, and fought for Sparta and Greece out of love for country and a sense of duty. The smaller armies of Greece usually beat the larger armies of Persia. God calls us as an army of free men, grateful patriots of the kingdom of God.

iii. "Understand, then, it is true that no man comes to God except he is drawn; but it is equally true that God draweth no man contrary to the constitution of man, but his methods of drawing are in strict accordance with ordinary mental operations. He finds the human mind what it is, and he acts upon it, not as upon matter, but as upon mind. The compulsions, the constraints, the cords that he uses, are 'cords of a man.' The bands he employs are 'bands of love.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **As those who take the yoke from their neck** refers to relaxing and loosening the yoke-collar of a plowing animal, giving the animal rest and the freedom to breathe.

d. **I stooped and fed them:** God humbled Himself to minister to His needy people. One might almost think it is beneath the dignity and honor of God to stoop so for His people, but He never thinks so. This is the heart reflected in the servant nature of Jesus (Philippians 2).

B. God's strict hand towards Israel.

1. (Hos_11:5-7) Empty profession brings the chastening of God.

"He shall not return to the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to repent. And the sword shall slash in his cities, devour his districts, and consume *them*, because of their own counsels. My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt *Him*."

a. **Because they refused to repent:** In this sense, it wasn't so much the sin of Israel that got them into trouble. It was their stubborn refusal **to repent** after their sin. For that,

God would make sure that destruction and exile waited for them.

b. **My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him: Backsliding** means that at one time, Israel had a closer and more real walk with God. Now that is in the past, and their profession is simply empty. They **call to the Most High** in a formal sort of way, but they do not **exalt Him** with their lives.

2. (Hos_11:8-9) God's sympathy in the midst of chastening.

"How can I give you up, Ephraim? *How* can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? *How* can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I *am* God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror."

a. **How can I give you up, Ephraim?** Though the dark clouds of judgment are on the horizon, God takes no pleasure in the chastening about to come upon Israel. Instead He says, "**My sympathy is stirred.**"

i. We are in sin, and guilty before God. Yet He says, **How can I give you up?** Justice demands that He do this, yet in His heart He must find a way of salvation. In this, God sends Jesus Christ, and on the cross Jesus was "given up" in our place.

b. **Admah** and **Zeboiim** were two cities near Sodom and Gomorrah that were also destroyed (Deu_29:23). God says, "I can't bear to allow My people to be caught up in the destruction that will come upon all the nations, as **Admah** and **Zeboiim** were caught up on the destruction that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah."

c. **I will not again destroy Ephraim:** Though their sin deserves it, God will not wipe out Israel. He will leave a remnant, and will restore the nation.

d. **For I am God, and not man:** The longsuffering, forgiveness, and compassion of the Lord toward His people

seems unbelievable until we recognize that He is **not man**, but God. His love and forgiveness are of a different order. There are many differences between God and man in the matter of forgiveness.

- Man cannot hold back his anger very long
- Man cannot bear with others when he is tired, stressed, or annoyed
- Man will not reconcile if the person who offended him is a person of bad character
- Man is often only willing to be reconciled if the offending party craves forgiveness and makes the first move
- Man is often only willing to be reconciled if the offending party will never again do the wrong
- Man, when he does reconcile, does not lift the former offender to place of high status and partnership
- Man, when he is wronged, does not bear all the penalty for the wrong done
- Man, when he attempts reconciliation, will not continue if he is rejected
- Man will not restore an offender without a period of probation
- Man will not love, adopt, honor, and associate with one who has wronged him
- Man will not trust someone who has formerly wronged them

i. What passes for forgiveness among men is nothing like the amazing forgiveness of God. "Suppose that someone had grievously offended any one of you, and that he asked your forgiveness, do you not think that you would probably say to him, 'Well, yes, I forgive you; but I - I - I - cannot forget it'? Ah! dear friends, that is a sort of forgiveness with one leg chopped off, it is a lame forgiveness, and is not worth much." (Spurgeon)

3. (Hos_11:10-12) The roar of God calls Israel back.

"They shall walk after the LORD. He will roar like a lion. When He roars, then *His* sons shall come trembling from the

west; they shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt, like a dove from the land of Assyria. And I will let them dwell in their houses,” Says the LORD. “Ephraim has encircled Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still walks with God, even with the Holy One *who is faithful*.”

a. **When He roars, then His sons shall come trembling from the west:** God speaks of the ultimate restoration of Israel, an expression of His mercy to Ephraim.

b. **Ephraim has encircled Me with lies:** God makes these promises knowing the present state of Israel. Though Judah is in a better place than Israel, God still makes the promises with full knowledge of their present state.

(Hos 11:2) But the more I summoned³ them,

the farther they departed from me.⁴

They sacrificed to the Baal idols

and burned incense to images.

(Hos 11:3) Yet it was I who led⁵ Ephraim,

I took them by the arm;

but they did not acknowledge

that I had healed them.⁶

(Hos 11:4) I led them with leather⁷ cords,

with leather⁸ ropes;

I lifted the yoke⁹ from their neck,¹⁰

and gently fed them.¹¹

(Hos 11:5) They will return to Egypt!¹²

Assyria will rule over them¹³

because they refuse to repent!¹⁴

(Hos 11:6) A sword will flash in their cities,

it will destroy the bars of their city gates,

and will devour them in their fortresses.

(Hos 11:7) My people are obsessed¹⁵ with turning away from me;¹⁶

they call to Baal,¹⁷ but he will never exalt them!

(Hos 11:8) ***The Divine Dilemma: Judgment or Mercy?***

How can I give you up,¹⁸ O Ephraim?

How can I surrender you, O Israel?

How can I treat you like Admah?

How can I make you like Zeboiim?

I have had a change of heart!¹⁹

All my tender compassions are aroused!²⁰

(Hos 11:9) I cannot carry out²¹ my fierce anger!

I cannot totally destroy Ephraim!

Because I am God, and not man — the Holy One among you
—

I will not come in wrath!

(Hos 11:10) ***God Will Restore the Exiles to Israel***

He will roar like a lion,

and they will follow the LORD;

when he roars,

his children will come trembling²² from the west.

(Hos 11:11) They will return in fear and trembling²³

like birds from Egypt,

like doves from Assyria,

and I will settle them in their homes," declares the LORD.

(Hos 11:12) ***God's Lawsuit against Israel: Breach of Covenant***

(12:1)²⁴ Ephraim has surrounded me with lies;

the house of Israel has surrounded me²⁵ with deceit.

But Judah still roams about with²⁶ God;

he remains faithful to the Holy One.

(Hos 12:1) Ephraim continually feeds on the wind;

he chases the east wind all day;

he multiplies lies and violence.

They make treaties¹ with Assyria,

and send olive oil as tribute² to Egypt.

(Guzik)

Hos 12:1-14

HOSEA 12 - ANCIENT JACOB AND MODERN ISRAEL

A. The deeply rooted deceit of Israel.

1. (Hos_12:1) Israel trusts in deals and alliances with surrounding nations.

“Ephraim feeds on the wind, and pursues the east wind; He daily increases lies and desolation. Also they make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried to Egypt.”

a. **Ephraim feeds on the wind:** The idols and foreign alliances Israel trusts in are useless. They are like trying to feed **on the wind**.

i. Clarke on the **east wind**: “They are not only empty, but *dangerous* and *destructive*. The *east wind* was, and still is, in

all countries, a *parching, wasting, injurious* wind.”

b. **Also they make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil carried to Egypt:** Instead of trusting in the LORD, Israel trusted in deals and payoffs to the surrounding superpowers. It was foolish for them to think that Assyria or Egypt was more powerful or dependable than the LORD was.

2. (Hos_12:2-6) Ancient Jacob is an example of Israel’s present deceit.

“The LORD also *brings* a charge against Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his deeds He will recompense him. He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled with God. Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him *in* Bethel, and there He spoke to us; that is, the LORD God of hosts. The LORD *is* His memorable name. So you, by *the help of* your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually.”

a. **He took his brother by the heel in the womb:** Here, God looks back at the patriarch Jacob and how Israel in Hosea’s day was just like their forefather Jacob in the days of Genesis. In ancient Israel, a “heel-catcher” was a double-dealer, someone who achieved their goals through crafty and dishonest means. Through Hosea, God says, “That was Jacob then and it is Israel now.”

i. “‘To grasp the heel’ also meant to go behind one’s back in order to deceive or trick him, and this became the dominant characteristic of the man.” (Boice)

b. **In his strength he struggled with God:** The prophet recalls the struggle between Jacob and the Man of Gen_32:24-30. Jacob refused to submit to God, so God demanded submission from him in a literal wrestling match.

i. **He struggled with God** reinforces a point already made clear in Gen_32:24-30 : Jacob wrestled with the LORD God, who appeared in human form as a Man. Since this was a unique messenger from heaven, He is also

appropriately described as an **Angel** of the LORD.

c. **He struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him:** Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Hosea emphasizes two more details from the Gen_32:24-30 account. First, he tells us that Jacob **prevailed** in the wrestling match. Second, he tells us that Jacob **wept** in the struggle.

i. How can it be said that Jacob **prevailed**? He **prevailed** in the only way anyone can when they struggle against God. We prevail when we lose and know it, surrendering to God.

ii. Why is it important to know that Jacob **wept**? Because it helps us understand how desperate and broken he was as he hung on the LORD, now pleading only for a blessing.

d. **So you, by the help of your God, return:** Jacob came to the place where he knew God had beaten him, and all he could do was hang on to God and plead for a blessing. **So you** speaks to Israel, saying they should return to God the same way.

i. **By the help of your God, return** reminds us that we can never even return to the LORD without His help.

This shows how weak we are and how much we really depend on Him.

B. Judgment promised against a confident Israel.

1. (Hos_12:7-11) Though Israel is confident in its wealth, God will bring them low.

"A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales *are* in his hand; he loves to oppress. And Ephraim said, 'Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; *in* all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that *is* sin.' But I *am* the LORD your God, ever since the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast. I have also spoken by the prophets, and have multiplied visions; I have given symbols through the witness of the prophets." Though Gilead *has* idols; surely they are vanity; though they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal, indeed their altars *shall be* heaps in the furrows of the field.

a. **Surely I have become rich:** Hosea prophesied during a time of great prosperity, but spiritual and moral decadence in Israel. When things are good financially, it's hard for people to believe that their society is in trouble (**in all my labors they shall find in me no iniquity that is sin**).

i. **Canaanite** in this context probably means “merchant” because the Canaanites at this time were well-known merchants and traders. Clarke says, “Ephraim is as corrupt as those heathenish traffickers were.”

b. **I will again make you dwell in tents:** Though Israel enjoyed financial prosperity and fine homes, God's judgment would bring them into exile and humble **tents** again. This judgment is certain because God has **spoken by the prophets**, yet they did not listen.

c. **Their altars shall be heaps in the furrows of the field:** Pagan altars were built high and stately to add dignity to the pagan god. When God's judgment comes, all those altars will be brought low, so the only altars will be the hills made by the **furrows of the field**.

2. (Hos_12:12-14) Reproach will return upon Ephraim.

Jacob fled to the country of Syria; Israel served for a spouse, and for a wife he tended *sheep*. By a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was preserved. Ephraim provoked *Him* to anger most bitterly; therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him, and return his reproach upon him.

a. **Jacob fled to the country of Syria:** The previous passage brought up the impending exile of Israel, and now Hosea makes a connection between the coming exile of Israel and the “exile” of Jacob when he fled from Esau to his uncle Laban in Syria.

b. **By a prophet he was preserved . . . therefore the Lord will leave the guilt of his bloodshed upon him:** Though God send prophets to Israel, they still rejected His word. They **provoked Him to anger most bitterly**, so

God will leave them in their guilt, and **return** the **reproach** of Egypt's slavery upon them.

(Hos 12:2) The LORD also has a covenant lawsuit³ against Judah;

he will punish Jacob according to his ways

and repay him according to his deeds.

(Hos 12:3) ***Israel Must Return to the God of Jacob***

In the womb he attacked his brother;

in his manly vigor he struggled⁴ with God.

(Hos 12:4) He struggled⁵ with an angel and prevailed;

he wept and begged for his favor.

He found God⁶ at Bethel,⁷

and there he spoke with him!⁸

(Hos 12:5) As for the LORD God Almighty,

the LORD is the name by which he is remembered!⁹

(Hos 12:6) But you must return¹⁰ to your God,

by maintaining love and justice,

and by waiting¹¹ for your God to return to you.¹²

(Hos 12:7) ***The Lord Refutes Israel's False Claim of Innocence***

The businessmen love to cheat;¹³

they use dishonest scales.¹⁴
(Hos 12:8) Ephraim boasts,¹⁵ "I am very rich!

I have become wealthy!¹⁶

In all that I have done to gain my wealth,¹⁷

no one can accuse me of any offense¹⁸ that is actually
sinful."¹⁹

(Hos 12:9) "I am the LORD your God²⁰ who brought you²¹
out of Egypt;

I will make you live in tents again as in the days of old.²²

(Hos 12:10) I spoke to the prophets;

I myself revealed many visions;²³

I spoke in parables²⁴ through²⁵ the prophets."

(Hos 12:11) Is there idolatry²⁶ in Gilead?²⁷

Certainly its inhabitants²⁸ will come to nothing!²⁹

Do they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal?

Surely their altars will be like stones heaped up on a plowed
field!

(Hos 12:12) ***Jacob in Aram, Israel in Egypt, and
Ephraim in Trouble***

Jacob fled to the country of Aram,

then Israel worked³⁰ to acquire a wife;

he tended sheep to pay for her.

(Hos 12:13) The LORD brought Israel out of Egypt by a prophet,

and due to a prophet³¹ Israel³² was preserved alive.³³

(Hos 12:14) But Ephraim bitterly³⁴ provoked him to anger;

so he will hold him accountable for the blood he has shed,³⁵

his Lord³⁶ will repay him for the contempt he has shown.³⁷

(Hos 13:1) ***Baal Worshipers and Calf Worshipers to be Destroyed***

When Ephraim¹ spoke,² there was terror;³

he was exalted⁴ in Israel,

but he became guilty by worshiping Baal and died.

(Guzik)

Hos 13:1-16

HOSEA 13 - "I WILL BE YOUR KING"

A. Two pictures of judgment.

1. (Hos_13:1-3) Sinful Israel will be scattered like the morning clouds.

When Ephraim spoke, trembling, he exalted *himself* in Israel; but when he offended through Baal *worship*, he died. Now they sin more and more, and have made for themselves molded images, idols of their silver, according to their skill; all of it *is* the work of craftsmen. They say of them, "Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves!" Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes

away, like chaff blown off from a threshing floor and like smoke from a chimney.

a. **Now they sin more and more:** God never blessed Israel when they worshipped Baal, but that didn't stop them. They kept after their idolatry **more and more**.

b. **The men who sacrifice** may instead have the idea of *engaging in human sacrifice*, and could be translated "the sacrificers of men." In ancient Israel human sacrifice was almost always child-sacrifice. Hosea has already spoken of this horrible practice in Hos_9:13 and perhaps in Hos_5:2.

i. "Viewed together, the sin is a total perversion of values. A craftsman's work is elevated to divine status; human beings sacrifice their offspring to a metal object from whose lifeless form they also beg help; persons embrace with adulation the images of the very animals that they use for ploughing, threshing and hauling." (Hubbard)

c. **Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud and like the early dew that passes:** Because Israel trusted in themselves and in idols, they could not *stand*. They would pass like the **early dew**.

2. (Hos_13:4-8) Sinful Israel will be torn apart as if by a lion.

"Yet I *am* the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt, and you shall know no God but Me; for *there is* no Savior besides Me. I knew you in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. When they had pasture, they were filled; they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me. So I will be to them like a lion; like a leopard by the road I will lurk; I will meet them like a bear deprived *of her cubs*; I will tear open their rib cage, and there I will devour them like a lion. The wild beast shall tear them."

a. **Yet I am the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt:** Israel changed, but the LORD God did not. He is still the only God and the only Savior, and His people will be left desolate when they leave Him.

b. **They were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me:** It is a strange and terrible

aspect of human nature that when times are good, we often forget the God who blessed us. When times are bad we are often more likely to turn our hearts back to God.

i. At the end of the 20th Century, Americans were in a season of unprecedented prosperity. Yet statistics show that in the 1990s churchgoers gave a smallest percentage of their income in contributions since the Great Depression.

Sadly, often when we are **filled**, then we find our hearts **exalted**, and soon we forget God.

c. **So I will be to them like a lion:** When we neglect and affront God as He blesses, we then will often face the chastening hand of God. It isn't because God hates us, but because we have demonstrated that we will only turn to Him when times are bad.

i. "The three mentioned - lion, leopard, and bear - were all native to Palestine and known for their relentless manner of killing prey." (Wood)

B. God, the only hope of Israel.

1. (Hos_13:9-11) The rejected King and the imposed king.

"O Israel, you are destroyed, but your help *is* from Me. I will be your King; where *is any other*, that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, 'Give me a king and princes'? I gave you a king in My anger, and took *him* away in My wrath."

a. **You are destroyed, but your help is from Me:** Even when Israel feels the sting of God's chastening hand, they can still find **help** from the LORD, if they will only turn to Him.

b. **I will be your King . . . I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath:** God wanted to be recognized as the King of Israel, no matter which man sat on the royal throne. When they rejected the LORD as King, He gave them the kind of kings their hearts wanted and deserved, and then even took those kings as further judgment.

2. (Hos_13:12-16) The sorrowful judgment of Ephraim and her children.

“The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up; his sin *is* stored up. The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him. He *is* an unwise son, for he should not stay long where children are born. I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes. Though he is fruitful among *his* brethren, an east wind shall come; the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness. Then his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up. He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize. Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God. They shall fall by the sword, their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child ripped open.”

a. **The sorrows of a woman in childbirth shall come upon him:** Labor pains often come unexpectedly, are intense, and increase in their pain and duration. In the same way, judgment will come upon Israel.

b. **I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death:** The sin and judgment of Israel is great, but not greater than God’s ability and power to redeem. He can even **redeem . . . from death**, so that **death** and the **grave** are mocked as defeated foes.

i. Paul quoted the Septuagint translation of Hos_13:14 in describing our triumph over death in our sharing in the resurrection of Jesus: *O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?* (1Co_15:55) c. **Samaria is held guilty, for she has rebelled against her God:** In the long term, Israel will see the glory of God’s redemption and His power over sin and death. In the near term, Israel will be chastened for their rebellion against God.

(Hos 13:2) Even now they persist in sin!5

They make metal images for themselves,

idols that they skillfully fashion⁶ from their own silver;

all of them are nothing but the work of craftsmen!

There is a saying about them:⁷

"Those who sacrifice⁸ to the calf idol are calf kissers!"⁹
(Hos 13:3) Therefore they will disappear like¹⁰ the morning
mist,¹¹

like early morning dew that evaporates,¹²

like chaff that is blown away¹³ from a threshing floor,

like smoke that disappears through an open window.
(Hos 13:4) ***Well-Fed Israel Will Be Fed to Wild Animals***

But I am the LORD your God,

who brought you out of Egypt.

Therefore, you must not acknowledge any God but me;

except me there is no Savior.
(Hos 13:5) I cared¹⁴ for you in the wilderness,

in the dry desert where no water was.¹⁵

(Hos 13:6) When they were fed,¹⁶ they became satisfied;

when they were satisfied, they became proud;¹⁷

as a result, they forgot me!

(Hos 13:7) So¹⁸ I will pounce on them like a lion;¹⁹

like a leopard I will lurk by the path.

(Hos 13:8) I will attack them like a bear robbed of her cubs

—

I will rip open their chests.

I will devour them there like a lion —

like a wild animal would tear them apart.

(Hos 13:9) ***Israel's King Unable to Deliver the Nation***

I will destroy you,²⁰ O Israel!

Who²¹ is there to help you?

(Hos 13:10) Where²² then is your king,

that he may save you in all your cities?

Where are²³ your rulers for whom you asked, saying,

"Give me a king and princes"?
(Hos 13:11) I granted²⁴ you a king in my anger,

and I will take him away in my wrath!
(Hos 13:12) ***Israel's Punishment Will Not Be Withheld Much Longer***

The punishment²⁵ of Ephraim has been decreed;²⁶

his punishment is being stored up for the future.
(Hos 13:13) The labor pains of a woman will overtake him,

but the baby will lack wisdom;

when the time arrives,

he will not come out of the womb!
(Hos 13:14) ***The Lord Will Not Relent from the Threatened Judgment***

Will I deliver them from the power of Sheol? No, I will not!²⁷

Will I redeem them from death? No, I will not!

O Death, bring on your plagues!²⁸

O Sheol, bring on your destruction!²⁹

My eyes will not show any compassion!³⁰
(Hos 13:15) ***The Capital of the Northern Empire Will Be Destroyed***

Even though he flourishes like a reed plant,³¹

a scorching east wind will come,

a wind from the LORD rising up from the desert.

As a result, his spring will dry up;³²

his well will become dry.

That wind³³ will spoil all his delightful foods

in the containers in his storehouse.

(Hos 13:16) (14:1)³⁴ Samaria will be held guilty,³⁵

because she rebelled against her God.

They will fall by the sword,

their infants will be dashed to the ground —

their³⁶ pregnant women will be ripped open.

(Hos 14:1) ***Prophetic Call to Genuine Repentance***

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,

for your sin has been your downfall!¹

(Guzik)

Hos 14:1-9

HOSEA 14 - REAL WISDOM TURNS ISRAEL BACK TO THE LORD

"This is a wonderful chapter to be at the end of such a book. I had never expected from such a prickly shrub to gather so fair a flower, so sweet a fruit; but so it is: where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. No chapter in the Bible can be more rich in mercy than this last of Hosea; and yet no chapter in the Bible might, in the natural order of things, have been more terrible in judgment. Where we looked for the blackness of darkness, behold a noontide of light!" (Charles Spurgeon) A. Israel's repentance and God's response.

1. (Hos_14:1-3) What Israel should say in their repentance.

O Israel, return to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity; take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; receive *us* graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, '*You are our gods.*' for in You the fatherless finds mercy."

a. **Take words with you, and return to the LORD:** In returning to the Lord, Israel must come on God's terms, not their own. God says, "When you return to Me, **take words with you**. I want you to return to Me not with a silent feeling in your heart, but with proper words of repentance and trust in Me."

i. When we come before the LORD, it is essential to **take words with you**. There is a place for sharing the inarticulate feelings of the heart with God, but that is not the essence of fellowship and prayer with Him. The worship of God is intelligent, and God made us able to communicate ideas and feelings with words. It isn't enough to sit before the LORD and feel love towards Him. Instead, **take words with you** - *tell God that you love Him*. It isn't enough to feel repentance before the LORD. Instead, **take words with you** and *tell God you repent before Him*.

ii. This is the same idea that Paul expressed in Rom_10:8-10 : *But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* God commands us to communicate with Him in **words**, not only ideas or feelings.

iii. What words do we take with us? Take the words God gives you in His Word! When we communicate to God in the words and ideas of Scripture, we find an articulate and effective voice before God.

b. **Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously:** When we return to the LORD, taking words with us, we must first come humbly. We recognize our sin and our total dependence on the grace of God.

c. Literally, Hos_14:2 says *for we will offer the calves of our lips*. Since bull calves were often brought for sacrifice, the translators felt justified in putting it **for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips**. However, the more literal rendering shows just how plainly our words of praise, worship, confession, petition, or intercession can be a sacrifice before God.

d. **Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, "You are our gods"** : When we return to the LORD, taking words with us, we come renouncing our dependence on all other things. We recognize that the LORD and the LORD alone can make the difference in our life.

e. **For in You the fatherless finds mercy:** When we return to the LORD, taking words with us, we come declaring His greatness. We tell of what a great and merciful God we have.

2. (Hos_14:4-7) God promises to restore a repentant Israel.

“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon. Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall be revived *like* grain, and grow like a vine.

Their scent *shall be* like the wine of Lebanon.”

a. **I will heal their backsliding**: God saw that Israel was bent on backsliding from Him (Hos_11:7), but He promises to heal the backsliding of a repentant Israel. He does it not because Israel now deserves it, but because it is in His nature to **love them freely**.

i. The word is *compassionate*: **I will heal their backsliding**. This shows God looks on our **backsliding** more like a *disease* than a *crime*. He does not say, “I will pardon their backsliding.” It is “as though he said, ‘My poor people, I do remember that they are but dust; they are liable to a thousand temptations through the fall, and they soon go astray; but I will not treat them as though they were rebels, I will look upon them as patients, and they shall look upon me as a physician.’” (Spurgeon)

ii. The word is certain: **I will heal their backsliding**. Not “I might heal” or “I could heal” or “I can try to heal,” but **I will heal their backsliding**. Come to God for healing of your backsliding, and He **will** do it! God is too great a physician to allow any patient to leave His office without being healed.

iii. The word is *personal*: **I will heal their backsliding**. He speaks to His people, and addresses them personally. We have to come to the Great Physician and say, “Heal *my* backsliding. I want to be the ‘**their**.’” To get the healing, you have to count yourself among the backsliders.

iv. Are you backsliding? The signs may not be so obvious to others. When you see a tree broken over in a

windstorm, it's easy to think that it was the wind. If you look closer, you will often see that insects have been at work a long time on the tree, making it weaker and weaker. It really wasn't the wind that did it - other trees around it withstood the wind. It was the slow decline of strength, as insects nibbled away month after month.

b. This passage shows us what is restored when we return to the LORD.

- Growth is restored (**He shall grow**)
- Beauty is restored (**He shall grow like the lily**)
- Strength is restored (**lengthen his roots like Lebanon**)
- Value is restored (**His beauty shall be like an olive tree**)
- Delight is restored (**His fragrance like Lebanon**)
- Abundance is restored (**revived like grain . . . grow like the vine . . . scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon**)

c. **His branches will spread:** When God restores Israel, he will be a blessing to others, not blessed only unto himself.

B. A new Israel.

1. (Hos_14:8) Renewed Israel is free from idols.

"Ephraim *shall say*, 'What have I to do anymore with idols?' I have heard and observed him. I *am* like a green cypress tree; your fruit is found in Me."

a. **What have I to do anymore with idols?** When God's people are healed from backsliding, they focus on the LORD Himself and not on any kind of idol.

b. **Your fruit is found in Me:** At one time, Israel thought they might find fruit in themselves or in the idols of the nations. Now, healed of their backsliding, they find their fruit only in God.

i. **Your fruit is found in Me** can have two ideas, equally true. First, we find the fruit to nourish our soul in God, and God alone. Second, we find the fruit that we are to bear unto the world in God, and God alone.

2. (Hos_14:9) Renewed Israel walks in wisdom.

Who *is* wise? Let him understand these things. *Who is* prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD *are* right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

a. **Who is wise?** The wise man will see the message throughout the Book of Hosea. He will understand that in His mercy, God offers a wonderful opportunity for repentance and restoration, and it is dangerous and foolish to neglect that invitation.

b. **The ways of the LORD are right:** Even in the midst of promised judgment, the wise and understanding man sees that **the ways of the LORD are right**, and that every announcement of judgment is an invitation to repentance.

i. "In beauty of expression these final words of Hosea rank with the memorable chapters of the OT. Like the rainbow after a storm, they promise Israel's final restoration. Here is the full flowering of God's unfailing love for his faithless people, the triumph of his grace, the assurance of his healing - all described in imagery that reveals the loving heart of God." (Wood)

(Hos 14:2) Return to the LORD and repent!²

Say to him: "Completely³ forgive our iniquity;

accept⁴ our penitential prayer,⁵

that we may offer the praise of our lips as sacrificial bulls.⁶

(Hos 14:3) Assyria cannot save us;

we will not ride warhorses.

We will never again say, 'Our gods'

to what our own hands have made.

For only you will show compassion to Orphan Israel!"⁷
(Hos 14:4) ***Divine Promise to Relent from Judgment
and to Restore Blessings***

"I will heal their waywardness⁸

and love them freely,⁹

for my anger will turn¹⁰ away from them.
(Hos 14:5) I will be like the dew to Israel;

he will blossom like a lily,

he will send down his roots like a cedar of¹¹ Lebanon.
(Hos 14:6) His young shoots will grow;

his splendor will be like an olive tree,

his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon.
(Hos 14:7) People will reside again¹² in his shade;

they will plant and harvest grain in abundance.¹³

They will blossom like a vine,

and his fame will be like the wine from Lebanon.

(Hos 14:8) O Ephraim, I do not want to have anything to do¹⁴ with idols anymore!

I will answer him and care for him.

I am like¹⁵ a luxuriant cypress tree; ¹⁶

your fruitfulness comes from me!¹⁷

(Hos 14:9) ***Concluding Exhortation***

Who is wise?

Let him discern¹⁸ these things!

Who is discerning?

Let him understand them!

For the ways of the LORD are right;

the godly walk in them,

but in them the rebellious stumble.